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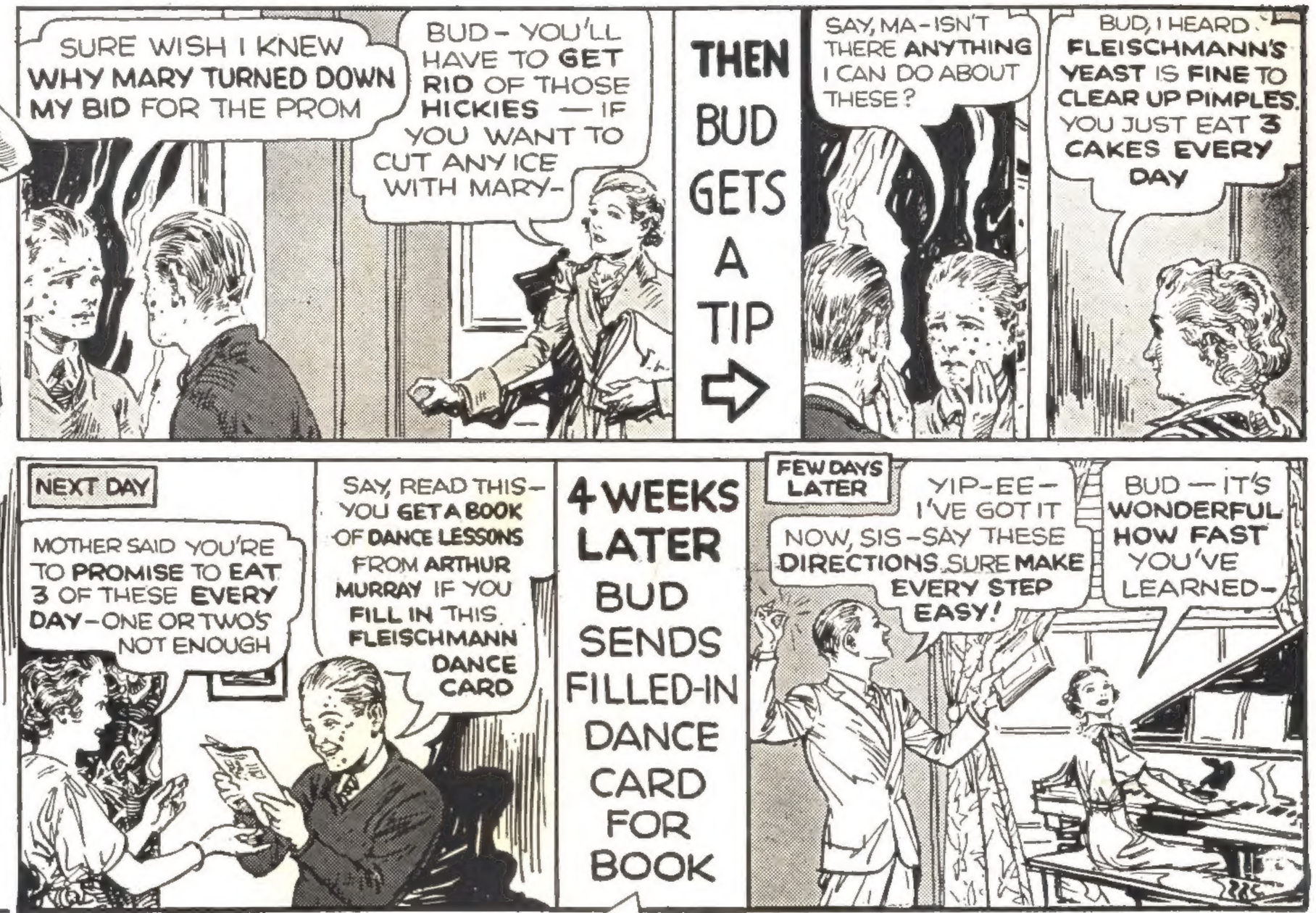
SURE WISH I KNEW WHY MARY TURNED DOWN MY BID FOR THE PROM
BUD - YOU'LL HAVE TO GET RID OF THOSE HICKIES — IF YOU WANT TO CUT ANY ICE WITH MARY-
THEN BUD GETS A TIP
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NEXT DAY
MOTHER SAID YOU'RE TO PROMISE TO EAT 3 OF THESE EVERY DAY - ONE OR TWO'S NOT ENOUGH
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THAT'S MY KID BROTHER - HE'S NOT HALF BAD IS HE?
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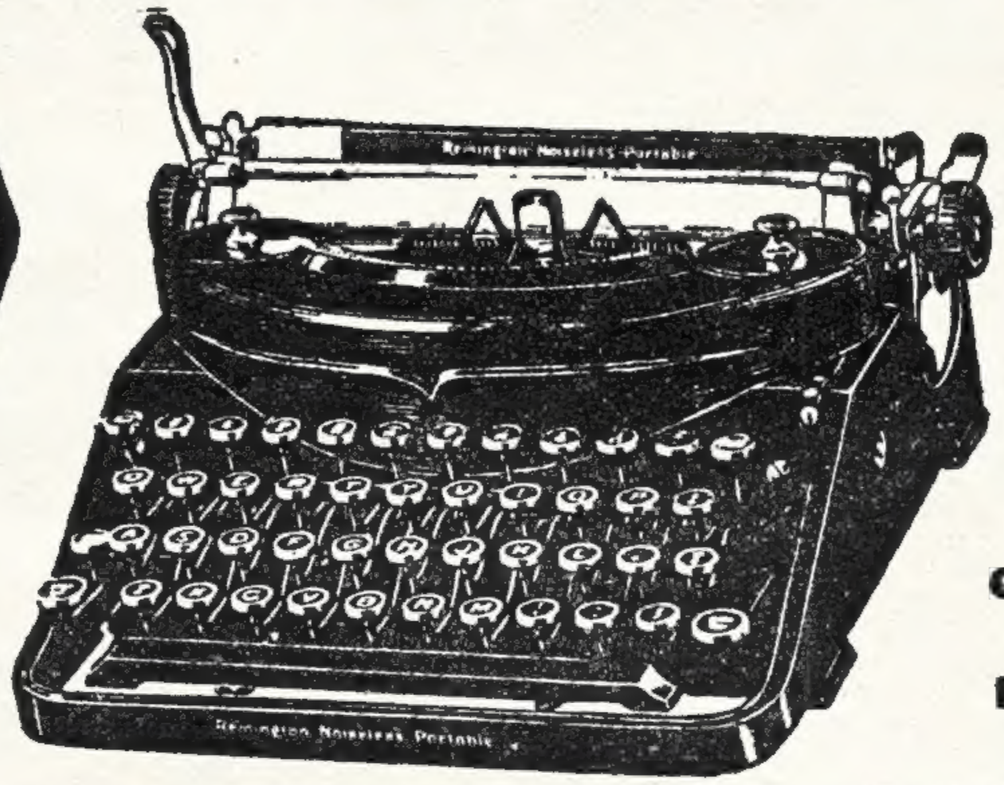

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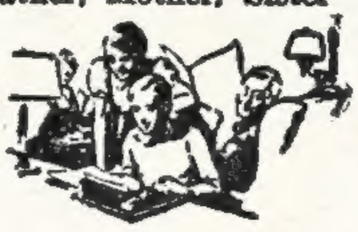

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Vol. 96, No. 6 for Published Once a Month

April, 1937

Affair of Honor (a novelette) . . . . . GEORGES SURDEZ 8

Off the Jebel Timna, where Legionnaires fix bayonets and wait for the summons of *bico* bullets—"You—you—for you!—"

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Headings by John F. Gould, I. B. Hazelton, Lynn Bogue Hunt, Amos Sewell

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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Out of the Gale Came Cries of Men

Fishermen Blown to Sea in Sinking Boat Saved as Mate Checks Strange Light

"Two days and two nights we were out there drifting helpless in the gale, and all the while we pumped to keep afloat," write William Neher of New York and Warren Brown of Beverly, Mass.

"Time and again we'd sight a ship during the day, but couldn't make them see us. They'd go on by...leaving us to pump again...and put off drowning a little longer.

"But the second night, we figure our pumping is about over, our hands are so swollen we can hardly grip the pump handle, our backs ache like toothache, and we're beginning not to care much, when way off come the pin points of steamer lights. For hours, as those lights came nearer we signalled with our flashlight and when there was a chance of hearing us through the gale, we yelled like wild Indians.

'We owe our lives to Third Mate Charles Guy of this ship, the Tanker A. S. Hansen of the Sabine Transportation Co., Inc., and to the *fresh* DATED 'Eveready' batteries in our flashlight. For it was the light that attracted Mr. Guy, and made him change his course. Soaked by the storm, in use hour after hour, those DATED 'Eveready' batteries lived up to their reputation. If they hadn't we'd be down below there now with Davy Jones. (*Signed*) *W. Neher. Warren S. Brown*"

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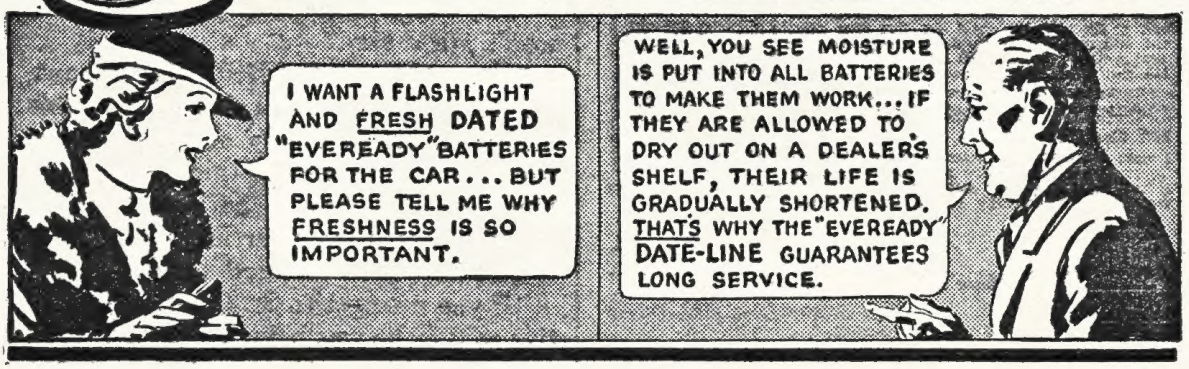
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by TIP BLISS

YOU NEVER know your luck—well, hardly ever.

On a September day of 1918 a battered army flivver was limping painfully along the St. Mihiel sector.

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At this point a German soldier stepped into the middle of the road with his rifle at the trail.

The Americans slumped back in their seats. They didn't know where they were, they had no ammunition. Nothing left but a prison camp. The German spoke.

"Boys," he said in good English, "I want to be a prisoner."

Sergeant Bell, after a slight facial contortion, accepted the non-operative end of the gun.

"Listen," the Jerry said. "I'll tell you. I used to be a barkeeper out in St. Louis. I came to Germany, to visit the old folks and the war bust out. For four years I've been trying to find somebody to surrender to. For God's sake, take me in."

They drove on. Some distance further—it might have been one mile or ten—they found an American detachment.

The sergeants presented their request to be relieved of their prisoner. The officer agreed.

"You won't stick him?" White inquired anxiously.

"No," the lieutenant promised, "we won't stick him."

"Honest?" pursued Bell. "Lieutenant, we don't want to crowd you, but this bird is a sort of buddy of ours and we wouldn't like to see anything happen to him. Besides, he's a barkeep. Would you mind crossing your heart on it?"

The lieutenant crossed his heart.

"If you ever get to St. Louis," the captive said as he was being led away, "look me up and everything will be on the house. Is that a bargain?"

"You're damn' tootin'," the two Yanks

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Lost Trails

Notices will be printed for three issues unless we hear from readers that they have filled their purpose. We shall print only requests that seem to us genuine efforts to re-establish old friendships.

Wolffe W. Roberts, Box 56, Amherst, N. H., wants word of Frank R. (Jack) Frost, last heard from at Hotel Casa Nova, Oakland, Calif.

Richard J. Lutz, R. D. 1, Verona, Pa., would like to hear of Frank Fittante. They were marines at Quantico in 1926, when Lutz was ordered to China and Fittante to Nicaragua.

Anyone in D Company, 15th U.S. Infantry, that went to China in 1912, or anyone in the Band of the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, in China 1913, 1914—write Pennock S. Broomall, 216 West 5th St., Chester, Pa.

Frank Merteul, care The Billboard, 25-27 Opera Place, Cincinnati, Ohio, wants word of a wartime friend, James (Roughhouse Jim) Novak, grenadier voltigeur, 10th Company, First Regiment, French Foreign Legion in 1918; later transferred into Czechoslovak legion in France; last heard from 1925-1926 camping at Caddo Lake in northern Louisiana trying to recover his health.

Roy S. Tinney, Chatham, New Jersey, wants to hear from "Lone Eagle," formerly of Eagle Bar Ranch, Winnett, Montana, and any other riflemen who shot at the National Proving Station, Tenafly, New Jersey, in 1919 and 1920.

A letter has come from Pendleton, Bangkok, Siam, for Capt. R. W. van Raven. Who knows Capt. van Raven's address?

Leslie A. Hall, 808 Hirst Ave., Penfield, Upper Darby, Pa., wants to hear from A. (Scotty) Fullerton, armorer, and "Hank" O'Green, signalman, on U. S. S. Michigan, 1912-14, and in the landing party at Vera Cruz, 1914.

John M. Brinson, 1180 Hale St., Beaumont, Texas, wants to hear from any of the "black gang," U. S. S. Arizona, April, 1917-July, 1919.

Charles H. Leveridge 502 Wiggins St., Greenport, Long Island, wants word of Joe Howells, formerly of Carstairs, Alberta, Canada, and Robert McLennan, last seen in Vancouver on way up country to look for Lost Lake.

J. Russell Leland, 2084 Eastburn Ave., Philadelphia, Pa., wants to hear from fellow members of the crew of the submarine O-12 in 1922.

Nils Lindstrom, 1831 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, wants word of Joseph (Texas Joe) Barton, first mate of schooner Albert H. Willis at Eastport, Maine, in 1932.

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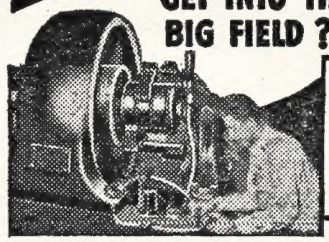

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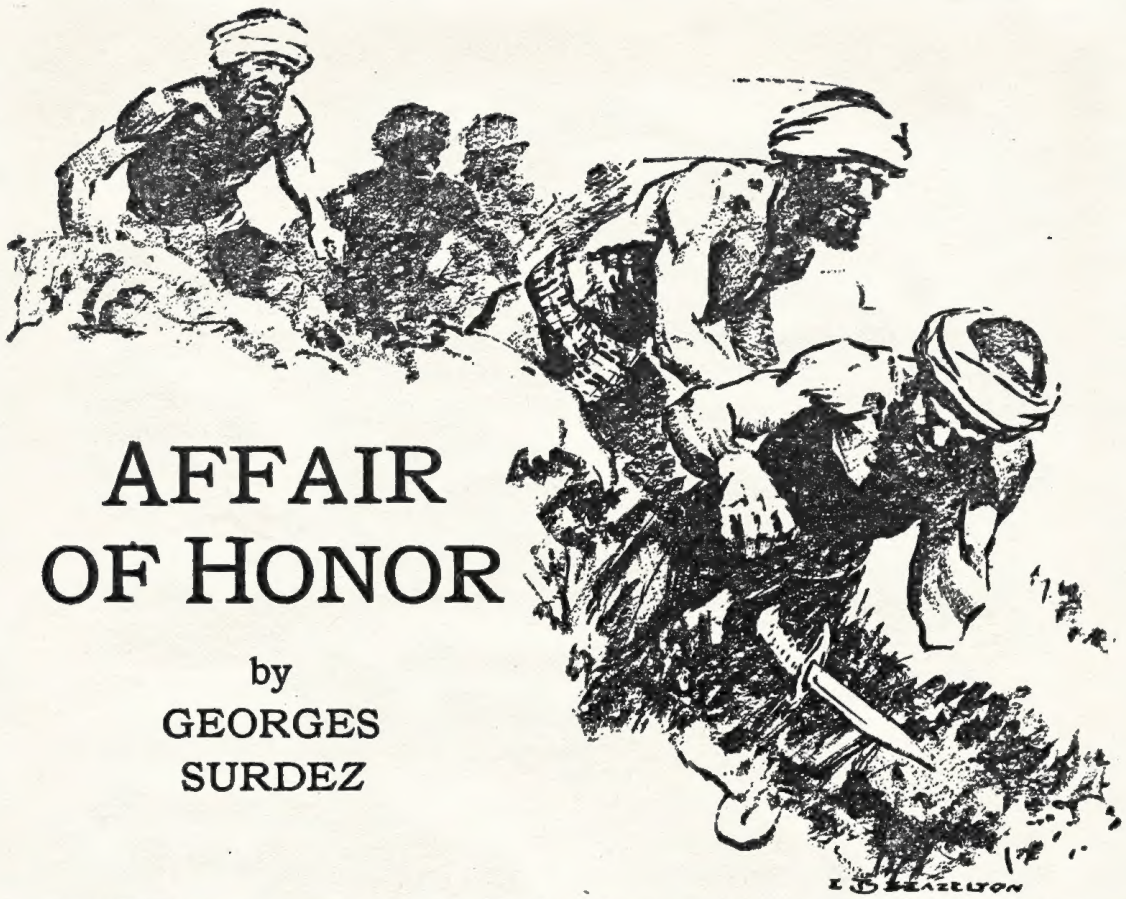


AFFAIR OF HONOR

by
GEORGES
SURDEZ

THEY were almost two hundred, men in khaki trotting slowly up a bare slope blasted by an ardent sun. Divided, they formed sections and combat groups, united they composed a company of the French Foreign Legion. From the crests came a continuous crackling of detonations, a fusillade that swelled furiously, sank into unexplained lulls. There were other sounds nearer, subtle and murderous, musical and insidious, a thousand sinister voices whispering.

"You—you—for you!"

From time to time, a silhouette would lift an arm, other silhouettes along the advancing line would repeat the gesture. The men stopped trotting, slid toward the ground in a single smooth surge. Then new sounds shook the air, the fierce, hammering discharges of automatic weapons. After some seconds, a first silhouette rose in full sight again, others followed, and the sweep of their arms ripped the soldiers from the earth, forced their cringing flesh erect, and they went on as if their muscular bodies were dragged forward by the spirit of discipline.

"Allons-y, en avant, la légion!"

On the crest, his body stretched against the flank of a small boulder, a Riffi sniper rested on a folded black cloak. He was a regular, a marksman detailed to shoot down those conspicuous figures with the bits of gold braid on their sleeves. His whole being, from naked toes to shaven head, was tensed, rigid; all his life seemed to pour into his right eye, his right forefinger. Four times, he had fired at one of the gesturing silhouettes, and four times he had missed.

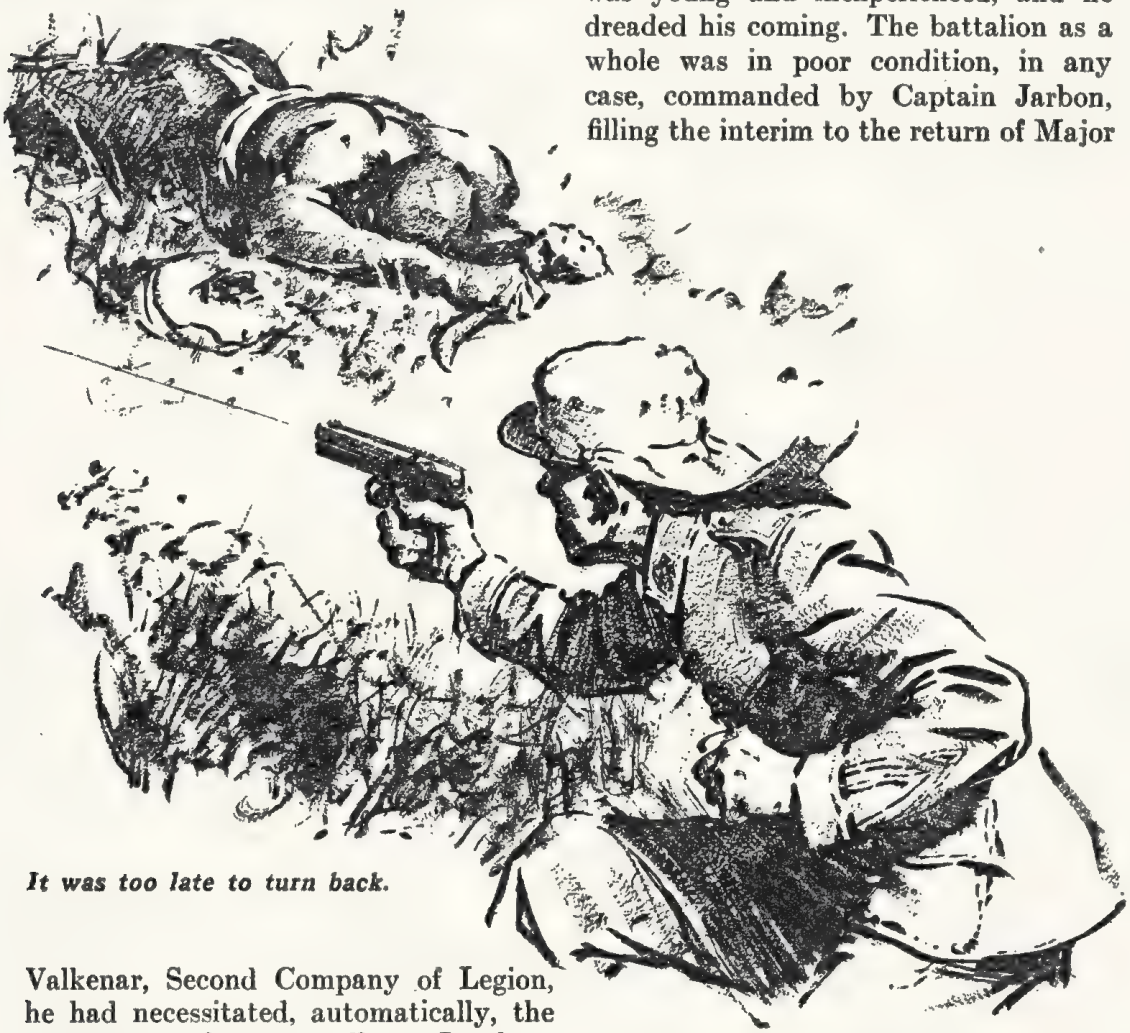
He waited for a fifth chance.

Even before he squeezed the trigger, he knew that he had him. The tall European took a hasty, lunging stride, as his head jerked back. Then his knees folded under his weight and he was gone. The sniper showed his teeth once, in appreciation of work well done. Then his lean wrist flicked, there was an oily flash, the

glitter of the brass shell from which death had struck, and his eyes sought another target.

That was all.

Yet his finger had tripped another trigger, released into motion forces held up for years. In slaying Lieutenant Valkenar, Second Company of Legion, he had necessitated, automatically, the appearance of a new officer. In those days many commissioned men were being weeded out, by death, by wounds, by sickness. Fresh blood was needed from the outside. So that young Sub-Lieutenant d'Herviller, waiting for assignment at Meknes, received orders to report at once to the Legion battalion at the Jebel Timna.



It was too late to turn back.

LIEUTENANT VALKENAR, slain by a Mauser slug, had been a good officer and very popular with his men. Senior-Sergeant Dortlinger replaced him in charge of the section.

Dortlinger was a veteran, thirty-four years old, a large, quiet, sandy noncom, courageous and matter-of-fact. He knew in advance that the replacement officer was young and inexperienced, and he dreaded his coming. The battalion as a whole was in poor condition, in any case, commanded by Captain Jarbon, filling the interim to the return of Major Ulysse Collin, convalescing of fever at Rabat. It was pulled out of the lines for a week's rest in camp.

D'Herviller reported on the first day.

He proved a surprise, even if he did not appear the ideal Legion officer. To start with, he called himself Herviller, had dropped the *d'* denoting nobility of family. His manner was stiff, distant, almost scornful. Dapper and handsome, a bare twenty-two, he faced seasoned, combat-worn soldiers he was presumed to command—men just emerged from

dangers, whose uniforms were in rags, whose boots, when they still had boots, were mended with strings and bits of purloined telephone wire—with calm confidence, with almost insolent ease.

The glance of his dark eyes was as direct and unyielding as a bayonet's lunge. He was tall and broad enough, lithe and smooth of movement, and he knew how to wear a uniform. But Dortlinger noted soon that he appeared bored. His first speech to the assembled section was a masterpiece of willed banality, delivered in an utterly detached fashion.

"Glad to be among you—Duty—Discipline—your known achievements and courage guarantee—worthy of traditions —I'm certain we'll get along well together—Dismissed!"

The men broke ranks, almost inarticulate with indignation. They were Legionnaires, not conscripts, and as such entitled to silence rather than barracks-yard clichés.

"He's a cocky——!" was the final opinion.

There was no doubt of it. Herviller's behavior was a challenge. Dortlinger himself had been granted but a nod and a quick clasp of the hand, without a compliment for the splendid condition of all weapons. Did not the fool understand that it was not easy to present him with good automatics after weeks of campaigning?

Consequently, the section celebrated the issue of new uniforms and boots, the next day, in true Legion style. The patrols were still combing the traders' shacks for strays at four in the morning. Captain Jarbon, as was normal, sent for Herviller and bawled him out in military style. And in the morning, the sub-lieutenant addressed the section once more.

Was he commanding schoolboys or men, he wanted to know? He was ready to grant, he stated, that after several months of active service they might relax somewhat. But had they not been taught the limit of their privileges?

He interrupted himself at this point, his glance fastened on one man: "You —what's your name again?"

"Tardon, Frantz, Lieutenant."

"Come out here." Herviller beckoned. The Legionnaire obeyed, showing off for the benefit of the others, not at all humiliated to be singled out. His big hands swung at his sides, for the section was not under arms. "What was that you were mumbling?"

"I'd rather not say, Lieutenant."

"I order you—or are you afraid to speak aloud?"

The man's chest swelled under three medals and one cross.

"I've never been much afraid, Lieutenant," he said. Then he added with a crafty smirk: "But I'm obeying orders, you know. I said—" and he pronounced the words clearly. They reflected nothing good on Herviller's birth, nor on his morals.

There was an instant of jubilation in the ranks. Then came a silence: Herviller, an officer, had struck a private publicly. And he had struck hard, for Tardon was picking himself up, automatically groping for the képi knocked from his skull by the force of the punch.

Dortlinger came forward to prevent further trouble, but Herviller's shout halted him.

"Stay where you are! Legionnaire Tardon, get back into the ranks." The sub-lieutenant faced the section, glaring: "I have infringed regulations, and you have your chance to get rid of me. That's all you wished, eh? Complain to my superior officially. But, privately, if there is one of you who wants the same, I shall be happy to oblige him before leaving!"

His eyes scanned the line of tanned

faces. They considered him with interest. His aloofness was gone; he was angry, almost mad with sudden fury. He said he would fight any one of them, and decidedly meant it! He had just done something, moreover, that all of them had reason to understand: struck first and thought later. Slowly, grins flashed here and there, until the whole line was smiling.

Herviller was safe from them, for he had placed himself in their power. It was some seconds before he understood that the crisis had passed.

"I've already spoken too much," he conceded: "Dismissed."

Legionnaire Tardon then walked up to him, mumbled an apology. Herviller smiled, for the first time since arriving, a young, cheerful smile. His large, well-kept hand rested on the private's shoulder.

"Sorry myself, old chap! Had to make you the goat, because you look as if a good sock wouldn't hurt you much."

Dortlinger walked back to camp with the officer.

"That was a long chance, Lieutenant. But it worked."

Herviller now was perspiring, nervous. He laughed.

"We're all here to take chances. By the way, Dortlinger, that is a fine section you turned over to me. Better than I dreamed of when I volunteered for Moroccan service."

DORTLINGER repeated this compliment, as he probably was expected to. And when the battalion went into action again, seventy-two hours later, Herviller was a popular man. The men knew that he was green, that he was hearing bullets, real bullets seeking for him, for the first time. They knew what was going on inside of him, and were proud, with individual, personal pride, when he received that baptism of fire without flinching.

Captain Jarbon, who had not liked him before, nevertheless cited him—and the men in his section felt that they had been honored.

"He'll go a long way," they started to say. "When the major gets back with us, he'll be pushed along. Collin likes that sort—educated, young, with guts!"

Dortlinger, who now spoke with Herviller often, mentioned the major constantly: "He's a great fellow, you'll see, Lieutenant! A real Legionnaire."

"We already have one thing in common," Herviller announced: "the same first name, and a pretty odd one, too: Ulysse! Well, we'll try to please him when he gets back."

Having attracted attention to himself, Herviller was talked about. There were several men in the mobile group who had been at military school with him, and they told what they knew. Nothing that is mentioned at a mess table remains secret; information is passed to the ranks and files by orderlies.

The first item was that Herviller had been nicknamed Josephine during his first semester in school. He was reputed a splendid fellow with a rotten temper. Little by little, other revelations of his past came out, for the grapevine gossip in the French Army operates constantly. Especially in the case of one who happened to be, as Herviller, a member of a fairly well known military family.

His father had been a captain of Hussars. Something of a rake and a gambler, a typical officer of light cavalry in the happy days before the War. He had ended tragically, killed by a former friend in a duel, over a trifling difference of opinion. The mother had been shocked by his death, had grown to detest uniforms, soldiers, anything connected with the army and its code.

She had become practically a recluse, retired in a country home, employing only women servants, bringing up Herviller from babyhood with three older sisters. When he had entered Louis Le Grand Lycée to prepare for military school, he had walked like a girl, and at first, in French composition, had often used the feminine gender for himself, from long habit!

Probably because of the merciless kidding of his comrades, he had grown into a surly, combative fellow, one of the best athletes in his class, a superb fencer, a fine boxer and an excellent rider. Undoubtedly the unfortunate experience had given him that brittle, aloof manner, also his inclination to react in the most masculine fashion to the slightest word.

Having volunteered for colonial service, asked for the Legion, he did not relax, but sought to prove himself as valorous as anyone. In the next fortnight, he won a second citation, then a third. If he had been seeking to get himself killed, he could not have acted otherwise. Tireless physically, he volunteered first for anything demanded. Moreover, he was lucky and had a rare gift for doing the picturesque thing.

For instance: A Legionnaire was left wounded in the open, and Herviller left cover to bring him in. And although he had not known it when he started, the man was Tardon, whom he had struck! That made a little scene appealing to imagination, formed a complete anecdote which lost nothing in the telling.

"You want to take it easy," Captain Jarbon advised him: "At this rate, you won't live very long."

Herviller laughed, shrugged.

"Oh, Captain, I run little risk. I have something to do before I die, and it isn't done. So I am safe."

"Ah?" Jarbon paused questioningly. When no further explanation came, he touched the young man's shoulder. "Be careful, as much as you can. I've recommended you for promotion."

HERVILLER paid no attention to this good advice.

Three days later he led thirty men across open country, under fierce fire, to clear a battery of mountain artillery attacked in a sunken trail. There was a fierce encounter, bayonets against knives—through which the sub-lieutenant moved armed only with a walking stick, which he used like a foil. He emerged with the top of his tunic hanging in shreds over his belt, his torso and shoulders streaked with superficial cuts.

Captain Jarbon sent for him. "You exaggerate, Herviller. I cannot mention you again so soon." He offered his hand. "Still, that was a nice job, and I'd like to do something for you."

Herviller grinned.

"You can, Captain—"

"All right. Let's hear what you wish."

"We're due for a big attack tomorrow or the day after, right? Well, one objective will be the minaret on hill six-hundred-and-four. I'd like to have my section assigned to the job. You know, do it with grenades instead of waiting for the thirty-five millimeter cannon to be brought up. Surprise and that sort of thing. I've read a lot about such stunts, and—"

Jarbon lifted his shoulders. "You know the objection to it—the chap in the lead is usually killed."

"I won't be, Captain."

Jarbon nodded. "I don't believe you will be, at that. It's a bit more risky to those engaged, but it does save time. Moreover, it's your idea, not mine. I authorize you to ask for volunteers."

Herviller laughed.

"I wouldn't dare, Captain. My fellows are touchy as the devil. I'll simply

say that the first two groups are designated. That means Dortlinger will be in charge if you're proved right—and he can be trusted."

"Yes," the captain admitted, "he can. Although you've got him nearly as crazy as yourself. Still, I suppose I ought to be satisfiied to have to pull on the reins instead of having to use the spurs, eh? Request granted."

War was a sport to Herviller, as it must be to a true warrior. He showed an intense desire to win, without real hatred of the enemy. So that as he explained his plan to the Legionnaires who were to follow him, making quick diagrams, unfolding the staff-map, Dortlinger almost forgot that the stakes were lives. The shadow of the tall officer, thrown by the candle against the tent canvas, moved in quick, gigantic gestures.

"All right, we start at zero hour. At zero-thirty, we reach this ridge, according to schedule. We—our company—swerve right, or east, as you like. The native infantry covering our battalion's flank is pushing through the ravine and along the ridge marked seven-six on this sketch. We keep on, and at the end of the first hour, we're there—"

Herviller's forefinger indicated "there" on the map; he puffed at his cigarette and swept the eager faces around him with a glance.

"Get the idea? It's then zero-one-ten. The supporting artillery is moving to a new position. Down slope a bit from us is that *koubba,* or minaret. They're no suckers, and they're not inside where a shell could do them in. Here's a plane photo: small trenches all around. Probably have a machine gun, or at least an automatic. They think we're going to wait for a Stokes mortar or a cannon, so they take it easy."

The sub-lieutenant slapped his hand on the plank supporting his papers, laughed.

"All of a sudden, there's the bunch of us coming down on them. I take the right, Dortlinger the left—grenades, grenades and more grenades. The balance of the section slants in from one side, while we're keeping them busy in front. We clean out the spot. With us anchored there, beating right and left with the automatics, the whole battalion can use that dump as a hinge for its progression. Saves us fifteen to twenty minutes, and we may have a chance to cut off their left wing—"

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Dortlinger nodded. He could see the whole thing, see it even more clearly than Herviller believed. The quick rush from cover, the lieutenant's long legs sprinting, the Riffi opening fire. Such stunts often saved time and lives in the long run, but all too often killed off the officer in the lead. But he was begining to have faith in Herviller's luck.

CHAPTER II

ZERO HOUR

AT DAWN the next morning the battalion was moving northward, an elongated khaki segment crawling over the buff and green slopes one link of that queer, insect-like, creeping monster, a mobile group on the march.

Light fog fleeced close to the ground. In the mist ahead, shots rang out, and at times, the marching men could see the darting flames of the discharges. Behind them, in the emptying camp, the artillery was starting out, and a trumpet squealed, brassy and clear, as Dortlinger hummed the words which praise the fertility of bombardiers' wives.

Eight o'clock: Ten minutes' halt.

Other infantry units swung by, deployed somewhere ahead under the warming sun, establishing contact. The rattle of fire-arms spread against the horizon, like the slow tearing of a gigantic cloth.

"The major's here—Collin's come—"

The battalion commander, having heard that his outfit was due for a hard show, had left the hospital on the coast and come to the front in a staff-car! And he was not even convalescing, a sick man! Every noncom, every officer not held by a definite task doubled toward the car. Dortlinger followed.

And he saw Major Collin, tall and leaner than ever, wrapped in a trench-coat despite the hot sun, conversing with Captain Jarbon. The field officer was at least fifty-five, a graying man with an aristocratic, thin face, whose eyes gleamed like turquoise stones in his emaciated, yellowed cheeks. He leaned on a cane, and shook hands with his colleagues, had a word for each noncom.

"Hello, Dortlinger! Still in running order, eh?"

"Can't kick, Major," Dortlinger replied.

It was normal that the chief should know him, for he had served in the battalion for three years. But the personal greeting touched him nevertheless. Between greetings and congratulations, Jarbon was apparently urging Collin to take command, for the major shook his head, smiling.

"Nonsense. Came as a spectator. Couldn't walk a mile—sick man, really, convalescing. People would think I'd come to do you out of a job you've prepared, organized yourself. No, no, it's your show. I have lost touch. You have new officers—"

"Only one you haven't met, Major. Sub-lieutenant, came to replace Valkenar. You heard—poor chap caught one at the Jebel Timna. Yes, must have been a sniper! This new chap is a fine officer." Captain Jarbon smiled proudly. "He must be around—Herviller!"

Collin grasped his arm. Jarbon whispered in the major's ear, no doubt telling him of the three citations.

Herviller pushed his way through the others. He was obviously awed, rattled. He was less at his ease at this moment than he had been under fire. This was a great moment in his brief career, this meeting with a famous chief, almost under fire, a few seconds before action. He did not appear conceited at the minute, was more like an overgrown schoolboy coming forward to be praised.

He stopped four paces from the major,

"I have something to do before I die."

came to attention and saluted. Dortlinger was hopeful Collin knew how to speak to men, and would reward the young fellow with a few well chosen words. But there was an awkward pause.

The major's face was as hard as granite; his eyes looked through the sublieutenant. Herviller, who had offered his hand, flushed and straightened. Jarbon, puzzled himself, repeated in an audible voice: Three citations, one from the general!

"All right, all right," Collin said. "charmed—"

And he turned his face away, to dismiss the chauffeur. Herviller, thus ignored, spun on his heels and strode away. Dortlinger ran after him.

"What the devil is the matter with him? Does he always act like that?" Herviller blurted out.

"Like what, Lieutenant?"

"Don't be so damn tactful. He cut me dead."

"He's been sick," the sergeant tried to explain, with complete bad faith. "He's old, too. They get that way about new faces in their outfits, sometimes."

"Did I kill Valkenar?" Herviller wondered. "Well, I've met your illustrious major—" he cut himself short, remembering he was speaking of a superior. "Forget it."

WHISTLES were shrilling.

Then the sections were on the path once more. Swiftly, news of the incident had passed along the files. The Legionnaires in Herviller's section were angry and astonished. Why had the old man—and

that term was no longer wholly affectionate—snubbed a fine guy before fifty witnesses?

"Maybe the fever affected his head—"

"Cranky from disappointment. Oldest major in the regiment."

Herviller walked fast, blindly. When he gave orders, his voice sounded hoarse, strained. Dortlinger was worried. In that mood, he would be reckless. Probably, Herviller would get himself killed to prove that the major had mishandled him!

"This is a lousy trade," he grumbled.

Nine o'clock: "Halt—at ease—clear the trail."

Again the column of Legionnaires rested, and other units marched by, Senegalese and Arab sharpshooters. News spread that the battalion should start the main attack at eleven. Meanwhile, other companies would clear the approaches to the hill positions. The sun was high in the sky; the men started to perspire.

Ahead, the rifle firing increasing, and when the wind veered, the shrill yelps of the Negro infantry could be heard. Guns thudded, and white balls bloomed in the blue, hung still a moment, floated slowly into nothingness.

A Legion runner appeared, handed written messages to various officers. The mules of the ammunition-train were led further away from the road; there drivers unloaded them.

This spot would be the initial base of the attack. The ambulance men put up their tents. Lieutenant Delphin, who commanded the section assigned to remain behind and guard the cartridges and wounded, was coming to speak to Herviller. He appeared embarrassed.

The sub-lieutenant appeared to have recovered some spirit.

"Cheer up, old man," he invited. "We'll keep the *bicos* away from you. You can play some other time." He held out a silver case. "Cigarette?"

"Thanks, thanks," the other muttered. Dortlinger drew nearer, sensing that something unpleasant was under way. "Look here, Herviller, don't hold it against me. Each in his turn, you understand. I'm glad to get into the show, but sorry you're the one picked to stay here in my place."

"Here?" Herviller laughed. "The orders were issued last night. I have a special mission—"

"Look at this—" Delphin handed over a slip of paper. "You can read, can't you? I'm to go in with my company, and your section remains here. Look at the closing line: 'This order to be communicated to the sub-lieutenant commanding the second section. Signed: Collins.'"

Herviller looked blank.

"Why? Why didn't I get a direct order? What's all this?"

"You've got me," Delphin admitted. "I saw what happened back there. Whether you know it or not, you have done something in his cabbage patch, because he's a very decent old chap, really! I hope it will be cleared up—"

"Never saw him before in my life!" Herviller protested. "And only heard of him since coming to Morocco. I don't understand why Captain Jarbon allows this—"

"Just a moment," Delphin interrupted, indicating Dortlinger with a glance.

He led Herviller aside. And the two paced up and down the mule lines, out of hearing, gesticulating and arguing. Obviously, Herviller was lashing himself into a fury. Delphin was growing angry himself because his colleague, unsportsmanlike, was grudging him his good luck. When the whistles called the end of the halt, he ran to his section,

with a brief word of farewell over his shoulder.

"We're staying here," Dortlinger announced to his men.

This brought about an explosion of shouts and protestations.

"Shut up, all of you," the sergeant bellowed. "Think I like to twirl my thumbs here? What can I do about it? Orders are orders!" As they crowded upon him, sullen and loud, he shoved a face away here and there, absent-mindedly using his knuckles once or twice: "Am I the major? I allow you to make a kick to him, the next time he's around. Shut up!"

He was angry with them, but he knew that they would calm down soon. What worried him was Herviller's behavior. The young man stood by the road, looking after the departing companies, clenching his fists. He was burning with rage and humiliation. Given guard-duty out of turn, during an important engagement, when he had three citations won in seventeen days!

Dortlinger saluted him and asked calmly: "Any orders, Lieutenant? Or do I take the usual measures for security?"

Herviller grasped his shoulder hard.

"What's wrong, Sergeant? What's wrong?"

"Change of commanders. Major Collin's evidently decided to take charge today, as he signed that order." The old sergeant choked over treasonable words, criticism of a beloved chief, warranted by this occasion: "You see, he feels that he can't let things go exactly as Jarbon planned—Captain Jarbon, I mean. Got to make a few shifts—"

"The devil you say! Why does he pick me?"

"I wouldn't know, Lieutenant."

THE young officer's expression was not pleasant.

"You wouldn't, eh? Well, I'll find out soon enough."

"How, Lieutenant?"

"I'll ask him."

"You can't question an order, Lieutenant."

"We'll see. This is discrimination. He'll give me an explanation right away, if it costs me my commission."

Dortlinger shook his head.

"You're assigned here. Can't leave without permission. You must know that, Lieutenant."

"I'll risk it!"

"And justify anything he'd done?" Dortlinger grew red in his turn, saluted automatically as if in apology for what he was about to say. "You're new, Lieutenant. I'm older than you and have been in harness a long time. Better drop it for the time being."

"And stay here, lose my chance to—"

"I respectfully observe that the men are watching you, Lieutenant!"

"Why not?" Herviller shouted furiously. "Are they idiots? Don't you think they've heard about the way I was treated?" He lowered his voice nevertheless. "Let him remove me if he wants to. But why humiliate them? This isn't a question of discipline, but a personal matter. I'll chance it, going to see him. The attack is two hours away. Technically, I'll be quitting my assignment post, but—"

"And he'll have you court-martialed, technically!" Dorlinger unconsciously played the gruff, wise soldier." When a man like the major starts anything, he'll see it through. Listen to an old-timer—"

"Dortlinger," Herviller snapped, "You bore me!"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

The officer paced back and forth nervously. Dortlinger pitied him. Most

young leaders had such an experience early in their career. They suffered an injustice, a slight. That was bitter to swallow, at twenty-two! And, unfortunately, this man's character was unsuited for patience. But he must realize that he was up against the impossible, that any move he made would simply contribute to break him.

"There's an out," Herviller resumed. "I received no direct order."

"You got one transmitted by a senior officer," Dortlinger pointed out." All you can do is to carry it out. You're covered. I heard the transfer." He sought to be helpful, to give Herviller a motive to wait without backing down too visibly. "You can send a man to obtain written confirmation, however."

Herviller looked at Dortlinger musingly.

"Right. I don't know whether you quite understand my position. Captain Jarbon will probably tell you more than to a private, so you'll go." The young man laughed. "I'll pass the buck to him! If he can give me his word that there is no personal slight for me, I'll stick here. If not, tell him that I'll disobey orders and go into the lines, alone. Not another word. You obey my orders. Take one of the mules and start at once."

AS the mule trotted across the open ground beside the road, the sergeant had a chance to think, and felt that he was participating in an odd venture. Two and one-half weeks before, he realized, what he was undertaking would have appeared stupid. For he did not like Herviller at that time.

But days count as months in the field, and he would have risked far worse than a severe scolding for the young man. The sub-lieutenant was stubborn, childish, but Dortlinger was hardly the one to blame him. For he too, when about his age, had resented an injustice from a superior, and had taken action. As a result, the other man had suffered a bruised chin and a cut lip—but that soul-satisfying punch had wrecked Dortlinger's career in his homeland.

Furthermore, as a Legionnaire, he understood that somber moods can grip men, moods when death or punishment seem easier to accept than silence or inaction. Herviller was getting ready to do something rash; his nerves were tense and resentment blinded him to reason and safety.

"Don't know as I blame him," Dortlinger grumbled. "As they say in the prison camps, he has his 'dignity as a man' to uphold." He had seen convicts, fellows who bore hardships and oppression patiently, risk additional years and the firing-squad to preserve some minor privilege.

"Where's the Legion?" he hailed the cavalrymen on duty at each fork of the trails. And he followed the direction indicated. Two nude corpses, laid side by side, revealed to him that he had reached the emplacement of the first skirmish, fought in the mist of the morning. Some yards further, he passed two wounded men coming back from the lines, one with a head wound, the other gingerly holding a shatttered arm.

Then he heard the whine of missiles overhead. And at the same time, he came upon the rear section of the battalion, resting in the fields. It was the last halt before going over the low ridge of sandy stone surging beyond them. The opposite side was under the enemy's fire. Fifty yards away, the officers were grouped, the four company commanders, the lieutenants. Last instructions.

He dismounted and approached them on foot. He contrived to attract Captain Jarbon's attention, and the officer came to meet him, spoke first.

"Serious trouble?" His tanned face was worried.

"Not yet, Captain."

"I was afraid," Jarbon stated softly." I don't understand anything about this. Does he know?"

"No, Captain. He wants to find out."

Jarbon's face reflected his anguish. He was in a poor situation, Dortlinger judged, caught between having to blame a superior or allowing a worthy subordinate to be mistreated without motive.

"Tell him—" He hesitated, then made up his mind. "After all, what's just is just, *sacre nom d'un chien!* Tell him to be patient, until we can adjust all this privately. The major has resumed command, and there is nothing I can do at this time."

"He asked me to remind you that you have trusted him with a special mission, Captain!"

"Don't I know it!" Having no other escape, Jarbon grew angry at Dortlinger: "I don't have to answer to anyone. I obey orders. Tell him this is no time to be sensitive."

Captain Marsillon of the third company, a neat, small, compact officer, who looked like a dealer in antiques garbed as a Legionnaire, strolled near.

"The young fellow?" he asked simply.

"Yes. He—"

"You don't have to explain, Jarbon. I saw and I heard. Look here, the lad's in your company, so you have to do the talking. But I'll stand by. Yes, I mean just that—ask him. He must know it's torture to that boy to wonder what he's done, why he's in disgrace. To hell with passive discipline—we deal with men! Of all the cold-blooded actions—All right, but this isn't the first time Dortlinger's seen a mess."

Major Collin had sensed the trouble, and left the others to come near. He had his pipe clamped between his teeth, as usual on the field, but it was not lighted. The flesh stretched on his thin bones quivered.

"We have fifteen minutes," he announced. "Just received news that the others are progressing satisfactorily. It will be up to us to finish the job in good style."

Jarbon moistened his lips with his tongue, shifted from one foot to the other. "Major, could I speak with you privately for a few moments?"

Collin braced his cane on the ground, folded both hands over the handle. His clear eyes swept Dortlinger, his two captains. Then a faint smile twisted his colorless lips.

"I very much fear it is no longer private." He lifted his head wearily. "I often felt it would happen, must happen. But it surprised me. I had no time—no time—to adjust myself, to prepare him. I have personal reasons that make it impossible, *indecent*—for me to touch his hand. He will learn why in time. And he'll thank me—"

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"He protests his removal from the line, Major," Jarbon explained: "It wasn't his turn. Passive obedience—"

Collin shook his head slowly.

"That isn't the question. I can't order that lad into danger. For once, a personal reason outweighs the good of the service. There are certain things that a man simply cannot do. I know his family. His mother is still alive, isn't she?"

"Yes," Jarbon admitted: "However, I don't see—"

Collin lifted one hand.

"You will. I cannot sign an order sending that officer into danger, I repeat—because after killing her husband, I must do what I can not to be connected with the death of her son."

THE three remained silent. It was one occasion when routine might yield to personal consideration. Dortlinger's eyes protruded from his head: Major Collin, the major, had killed a man, a Frenchman. He was—well, he was a murderer!

"I served some months in prison for it," Collins resumed with that same toneless, patient voice: "Sixteen months, and had to resign from the service. I was a captain then, a captain of Hussars. It took me thirteen years to be a captain again, in the infantry. Perhaps you understand what I mean. I had the curse of a woman on me, and of four children. I am afraid that some day, she might learn who was her son's chief—" The monotone faltered. "You understand?"

"Yes," Marsillon agreed dryly.

"It was a foolish business. D'Herviller and I were old friends, had graduated together, served side by side. I was received in his home, like a brother. That—that officer, he is my godson. You see, a slight difference of opinion, in a public place. Too much wine, a word, a slap. An officer does not accept that—he had to challenge me unless I apologized. I was an officer. I would have been disgraced had I apologized, so we met, three days after. Didn't last two minutes. He lunged and missed. My blade slid beneath his arm, sank in. He died.

"The code of honor compelled us to fight, the legal code forbade us to fight. The affair could not be hushed up. There had been too many duels in the past years, and a few deaths. Civilians against the army, newspapers against me. Oh, they contrived to trick it a bit—I was tried by a judge who fixed it so that it became 'involuntary homicide.' Sixteen months, and my resignation.

"Enlisted in the Legion as a private, at the start of the War. When the time came for me to get a commission, I had to tell the truth. So what I am telling you, several men know already. I want him out of my sight. He resembles his father." Collin nodded vaguely. "And there's his mother. Certain things can't be done."

"Why not?" Jarbon wondered. "I'm sure that the young chap would not judge it should interfere with his duty. He's brave and ardent, and the disappointment may break his spirit."

Collin shook his head.

"Nothing breaks their spirit. I was afraid he would be like—like the other, and refuse to wait. That is why I do not delay with subterfuge. Dortlinger, you may tell him. That should satisfy him. I cannot sign an order to put him in danger."

Marsillon laughed. "Odd—some unlucky beggar may get the job and catch it. And he won't be responsible at all."

"I've thought of that," Collin admitted. "So that I shall take charge of the two groups and carry out d'Herviller's mission."

"You're not a well man, Major," Jarbon put in. "I'm sure that someone would volunteer to—"

"And I'd be responsible for his death

if he got killed." Collin gestured weakly." No, I'll try to do it." He smiled. "What an insane business this is, once you try to depart from the routine, eh? Doesn't do to think about it."

"Proves the old army motto," Jarbon concluded. "One should not try to understand anything in the service." He took leave of the major and walked with Dortlinger, who located his mule. "Do as he says, old man," he advised. "Tell the lad. But keep it quiet otherwise." He shrugged. "It's a complicated business. The major said as much as was necessary, but old friends don't kill over a word. It's plain he loved the boy's mother, still thinks of her. And it's natural that he should consider the fellow—a godfather should, eh, Dortlinger?"

"Sure, Captain. But do you think that the lieutenant will be satisfied with the explanation? He's pretty mad."

"If he isn't, he's hard to please!" Jarbon declared. "However, hang on to him, and if possible, keep him from doing anything stupid. See you tonight." The captain grinned and concluded piously, "Allah willing!"

CHAPTER III

"FORWARD, LEGION!"

DORTLINGER'S return to his section was delayed because the fields were now swarming with auxiliary native cavalry, and he was stopped several times by European officers and noncoms who believed, because he appeared to be in a hurry, that he had important news from the front lines. Batteries had unlimbered in the open and their guns thudded at a regular, even rhythm.

When he reached the mule lines, the first parties were forming, ready to carry the ammunition forward. Herviller's section did not participate in this work; it was idle, in support, with nothing to do unless the natives penetrated through the fighting troops.

From a distance, Dortlinger saw the sub-lieutenant prowling about, visibly nervous, like a hunting dog on a leash. The sergeant was surprised to recall his his thoughts on the way up. He had believed, at heart, what Jarbon and Herviller had surmised also and been unwilling to mention—that Major Collin, in a dim, unreasoning fashion, had been envious of the young officer's dawning fame, had reacted to jealousy.

Such jealousy was more frequent than one might think. Aside from historical rivalries, as had existed for instance between Generals Joffre and Castelneau during the World War, the entire army was the prey of such unavowed passion. Not many years before, Dortlinger had seen sixteen men die, victims of rivalry between two leaders—and the odd truth was that those who had died had gone willingly, knowing the facts, having accepted the spirit of competition existing between their chiefs as their own!

And at one time or another, he had heard of this colonel or that major: "He's trying to break so-and-so's back. He hates his guts." It was part of the game, if not the prettiest part.

"*Et bien*, what does the captain say?" Herviller asked.

"I'll explain, Lieutenant—" Dortlinger's eyes indicated his colleagues, who had drawn near. "My instructions are to report to you privately."

"Publicly insulted, privately soothed," the sub-lieutenant commented. "However, come along." A few yards further, he halted: "Well, Sergeant?"

Dortlinger looked at him, and was gripped with emotion. Like most professional soldiers, he was a sentimentalist when it came to family problems. Could he blurt out at once that the man who had killed Herviller's father was Major Collin?

"Lieutenant, you once told me that the major and yourself had the same

given name: Ulysse. Do you remember anyone else with that name?"

"My godfather, naturally—" Herviller said, impatiently.

"So—"

"What has that to do with this?" the young man challenged. He stared at Dortlinger, and his expression changed from cold resentment to bewilderment: "You mean that the major is de Solognes? That was his name. Oh—" Herviller's features relaxed: "Of course, that would explain. He doesn't know—of course, that explains!"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

The young officer repeated, unknowing, what the major had said: "I felt it would happen, that it must happen." He faced Dortlinger. "He killed my father, you know!"

"Yes, he said so, Lieutenant."

"And he doesn't know that I know why. Or did he say?"

"Mentioned a quarrel, difference of opinion—" Dortlinger indicated the shell-dotted sky. "There was barely time to say much. He did not know you were with us, and he was surprised. Could not offer his hand—"

Herviller had recovered somewhat.

"Look here, where is he now?"

"With the advancing battalion, Lieutenant. The attack started some minutes ago; I heard our automatics as I was coming back."

"But he's too sick to carry on."

"Has to. Couldn't assign anyone to do your job, so he took it himself."

Dortlinger did not expect Herviller to be grieved by the prospect. Even a man who was not revengeful could not feel sorrow in this case. After all, Major Collin, or Captain de Solognes, had killed this man's father.

"I must see him," Herviller said. "See him before—"

"You can't leave here, Lieutenant."

Herviller cut short further protest. "You obey my orders, and I'll attend to mine. I'm useless here, and you know it. Come along—"

The sub-lieutenant led the way to a section of Tunisian *Tirailleurs*, in support of its battalion ammunition *echelon*. The officer in command had been but a class ahead of his at Saint Cyr Military Academy. "Do me a favor? Two favors?"

"Anything but a loan," the other promised. "I'm flat broke."

"Chronic condition with you," Herviller laughed. "Listen, you take charge of my section. And, seeing that you are mounted and have no use for your horse, lend it to me."

"Which way are you going?"

Herviller pointed toward the front.

"I'm not entitled to a horse according to regulations," the infantryman declared. "So there's no compensation if it gets killed. Worth five thousand francs—"

"I'll guarantee that if I get it killed—"

"Hope you do," the other grinned. "I'd make a profit." He laid his hand on Herviller's arm as the sub-lieutenant was about to swing himself into the saddle. "I suppose you know what you're doing? You're not getting yourself into more trouble?"

"Hope not. So long—"

HERVILLER paid no more attention to Dortlinger. He turned the horse about and started off at a fast trot. And once more the sergeant felt his universe dislocating about him: From morning on, this had been a mad day. Now, Herviller had committed a major military sin: Abandoning his assigned post for a private purpose! Disobeying orders.

But what had Captain Jarbon said? He had urged Dortlinger to remain with Herviller. That also was an order! Moreover, it would be more interesting to be up there, in the combat, than with the mules. Three minutes later, the ser-

"You can't do that—you can't touch him. . ."

geant was mounted on a native cavalryman's stallion and on his way.

He knew the general direction followed by Herviller and soon caught sight of him.

In a very few minutes the mounted figure passed over the ridge behind which the Legion battalion had made its last pause. And shortly afterward Dortlinger reached that crest.

He reined for a second, scanned the panorama of round-bellied hills tufted with bushes, studded with boulders. Knots of men in khaki, small, mobile silhouettes, stirred against the ground. Galloping down the slope was Herviller.

He followed. And for many yards, he was utterly safe, for the natives across the valley were occupied by nearer targets. Then the air vibrated with the tenuous songs of passing lead. At this long range, the bullets had a weary drone. Right and left, he saw bodies, little yellowish heaps of torn flesh and bloody cloth. Fatigue parties already moved about, retrieving rifles, bayonets, cartridges officially, in many cases trinkets and money as well. And in the distance, the rifles and the cannon were making fresh victims.

"For you—you—"

This slug was nearer, tenser. More followed. Snipers had perceived the riders. And for a marksman, a mounted target is somehow more alluring. Herviller must have realized this, for he dismounted suddenly, turned the horse about and slapped its rump. Then he continued, on foot. Dortlinger imitated him. They were six or seven hundred

yards behind the deployed sections of the battalion, which were advancing in bounds of fifty to seventy-five meters.

Herviller grew more careful, took whatever cover offered. And before long he progressed in short sprints. Again Dortlinger imitated him. It was not long before the natives noticed that as soon as one man started to run, another appeared, less than a hundred yards behind. And in no time at all, Dortlinger realized this meant danger to him. An expected target is easier to hit.

It was Herviller who solved the situation. He timed his rushes with those of the attacking troops, when attention was divided. Once, as he stretched flat, he turned his head toward the rear, and saw the sergeant scuttling nearer. He waved his hand negatively, shouted something. Probably he was ordering Dortlinger to go back.

The sergeant fell, panting, at his elbow.

"You've got no business here," Herviller said.

"Neither have you, Lieuteant."

"I order you—"

"I'm following the captain's orders, Lieutenant." Herviller grinned.

"The major's over there, on the right, isn't he?"

"Sure," Dortlinger agreed. "He's where our section was supposed to be. The minaret is down slope from that next ridge."

"Twelve-three," Herviller glanced at his watch: "Or zero-one-three. They're right on schedule, so far. Listen, some of the batteries have ceased firing. Changing positions."

"Yes, Lieutenant.'

"They'll be going ahead again in a minute," Herviller resumed. "If anything happens to me, Dortlinger, tell the captain to hand over an old letter in my wallet to the major. A long brown envelope, folded over once, with 'for Ulysse, at sixteen,' written on the outside."

"Understood, Lieutenant—"

"All right. There they go!"

Herviller had gathered himself, and sprinted ahead, on the very heels of the Legion section ahead of them. Dortlinger followed, and at the end of their rush they were among the combatants strung along the ridge. And not far below them was a scene on which the sergeant had never rested his eyes, yet which was very familiar—the white walls of the small minaret, and the curling earth cresting the shallow trenches.

Dortlinger had the answer to one question: It was a machine gun emplacement, after all; he recognized the rhythm of a German weapon, not too well handled. Then the gun was quiet, as if drawing breath. And the crash of the batteries had dwindled away almost entirely.

"Twelve-nine," Dortlinger mused. "Any moment now—"

Some of the Legionnaires continued firing, but many of the others were already holding grenades, crouching in readiness. Herviller was creeping behind the line—missiles swept it from another angle—approaching the major. Dortlinger experienced a queer sense of unreality. The relationship of the two, this meeting under fire—no one would ever believe it!

DORTLINGER watched the sub-lieutenant and drew his own pistol. This meeting, evidently, had been what Captain Jarbon had feared, why he had given the sergeant orders to follow. Heedless of the bullets, the noncom rose and started toward the two officers. He did not know what he was supposed to do, whether he had the right to act—Herviller was justified in his hatred, in his resentment. To him, the major was not the superb soldier, the sympathetic leader, the Bayard of the Legion—he was the man who had killed his father.

Collin turned and saw the young man at his elbow.

The major was sick in body, had suffered a severe mental shock that morning when faced by the son of a man he had slain; there had been the humiliation of explaining his orders to subordinates, and the confession that he had been a prisoner. It was normal that he should be startled. But Dortlinger knew that what he experienced was not surprise but sickening horror.

Herviller spoke, but Collin could not have heard him because of the shots. The elderly officer rose, started running down the slope. The sub-lieutenant followed, with the automatic in his fist.

The men who had been selected for the rush believed the time had come, surged to their feet and scrambled after them. Dortlinger reached Herviller's side. At all cost, he must prevent a personal tragedy in the midst of the combat.

"No one will notice—" he thought.

And he threw his massive body in the path of the young officer. They dropped together. As Herviller tried to rise, Dortlinger held him by one leg. The sub-lieutenant shouted, struggled.

"You can't do that. You can't touch him—"

"Let go, you idiot, let go—"

The grenades were bursting now. The machine gun had ceased firing. Dortlinger saw the young fellow's arm go up, felt a terrific impact on the side of his face. He lost his hold, rolled over and over, then was on his feet. There was a taste of blood in his mouth, his skull was an echoing, aching vault. He tripped as his boot flew through space, tumbled again, into a shallow trench.

There were men around him, naked men with knives. Dortlinger felt that his own movements were slow, feeble, as in a nightmare. He did not discern faces and details then, but he was to remember everything with photographic clearness later—the glaring eyes, the beards, the teeth grinning at him. The butt of the automatic leaped back against his palm as he pressed the trigger repeatedly.

The way was clear—he went around the bend.

And there was Herviller, leaning over the major. God, he had killed him; he —Dortlinger grasped his young chief by the throat, pushed him back. He howled incoherent words: Revenge or not, this was murder, murder—

"Assassin, assassin!"

And without transition, it seemed, he felt liquid burning into his throat. He was on his back. There was the lip of the trench and a patch of blue sky above him, the oddly foreshortened figure of a comrade squatted nearby.

"Hope I didn't hit him too hard," some one said. "But, Lieutenant, I

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thought he'd strangle you before I could bring the butt around."

"He's coming around," another voice spoke. "Come on, Dorty, take another swallow. You don't often get such stuff." It was, in fact, excellent brandy. "What's the matter with him, anyway?"

Herviller had moved into sight. His head and shoulders were silhouetted against the sky. Beyond him, Dortlinger distinguished Legionnaires working with entrenching tools: The position was taken, and being prepared against a possible counter attack.

"A misunderstanding," the sub-lieutenant declared. "I count on you men to keep this quiet. My fault, really. How are you, Dortlinger?"

"Pretty well, Lieutenant." The sergeant made an effort." Where's the major?"

"He's all right. Collapsed from weakness—"

"All clear," a voice called out. "Supports are moving up. We go on in two minutes—"

The hands holding Dortlinger released their hold; he was alone suddenly. Then lean black men in khaki leaped across the trench opening above him. His head throbbed furiously, and he closed his eyes.

DORTLINGER had obtained a small mirror from the ambulance orderly. The doctors assured him there was no permanent damage. And his bashed face, the pair of black eyes from the extravasation of blood, would not even count as a wound! What angered him was that Captain Jarbon, when he had reported to him, after the battalion was taken out of the lines, had laughed.

"You did your best, Dortlinger," he said, clapping his hand on the sergeant's shoulder. "Don't be offended because I laugh—partly relief at having been able to iron all this business out. Had to report Sub-Lieutenant Herviller's absence from his post, but the major's returned it with a note in his own handwriting stating that there's no need for investigation. The matter has been dropped."

"I don't understand anything about all this, Captain," Dortlinger protested.

"I'm not at liberty to tell you."

And that apparently would be the end of it. No one seemed to know anything, save that neither the major nor Herviller had applied for transfer. Dortlinger was left with his battered head and his burning curiosity, until the sub-lieutenant dropped into the ambulance to see him.

"I owe you an apology, Dortlinger. Afraid I struck you pretty hard, eh? It's most simple, really. I thought I had made it clear when I spoke to you about a letter in my wallet, for the major. But you could not guess, of course. You're a man and a Legionnaire, so you understand human weaknesses. This all occurred because my father was weak, until the very day of his death.

"He was a captain of Hussars, in those days something to boast about. And he had a genius for getting into messes, and luxurious tastes. Horses, gambling, women. That all called for money, more money. He believed he could scrape through always, but there came an end. A bad night at cards, trying to recoup —the invariable belief in his luck, a signature here and there, and convenient funds that belonged to the regiment. Then the alternative: A scandal, prison —or suicide.

"To be publicly branded as a thief was unthinkable. And, to his credit, he thought of my future, a bit late. It isn't the most desirable thing in the world for an officer—for it was always known I would be in the service—to be the son of a suicide. In the most natural way, he sought his best friend, my godfather, then Captain de Solognes.

"He pointed out that once he was out of the way, my maternal grandfather, who had money and hated him, would

provide for his wife and children. A suicide, he indicated, would spoil the girls' chances of good marriages, and hurt me. He reminded de Solognes that he had sworn, in church, to look out for my welfare! He did not wish to simulate an accident, for such accidents are always suspected.

"I don't know, I shall never know, how de Solognes reacted at first. But in the end he consented. There was a faked quarrel in a public place, a blow which made a duel compulsory according to a gentleman's code. My father had many faults, but he was brave. It must have needed nerve to give the signal agreed upon, to allow his friend's steel to jab at his deliberately exposed chest. He died honorably.

"Unfortunately, the duel had consequences for de Solognes which my father had not expected. The duels of the Dreyfus case were not so far in the past, and the law was upheld against the army code. De Solognes, who would have been forgiven a few years before, was treated like a criminal, jailed.

"Until I was sixteen, I believed that my father had been killed by his best friend over a petty matter. And I cultivated a deep hatred of the man. Something which my careless father had foreseen, and taken measures to stop. When I was sixteen, I was given a letter kept by the family notary. And I realized that de Solognes had given more for his friend, for me, than any man should give. I had always hoped to meet him, give him at least one satisfaction, that of knowing that his sacrifice had served.

"When I found that the major was my godfather, I grew afraid he would be killed before I could speak."

Dortlinger accepted a cigarette, remained silent.

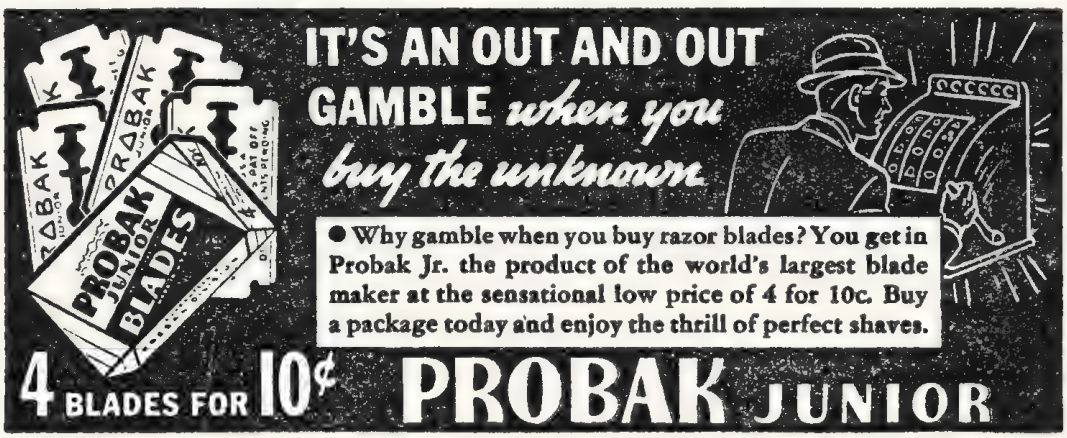
"What are you thinking about, Dortlinger?"

"That it was all very irregular, Lieutenant," the sergeant said at last. "Shows what happens when personal matters and sentiments are mixed with the service."

Herviller laughed.

"By the way, the battalion will be at rest for a week or so. Both Major Collin and I realize that you were the chief sufferer in this affair." He handed Dortlinger an envelope. "You'll find in this a special pass for Meknes, valid for six days, and sufficient dough to keep from being bored."

Dortlinger was a good Legionnaire. The prospect of a few days in a large city, with funds to enjoy life, instead of the dreary drills and fatigues of a rest camp in the hills, was not open to discussion. He shook the hand offered him by Herviller with warmth and did not even think to remark that special leave, granted for favors not concerned with his appointed duties, was an abuse of the major's powers—and against regulations.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"Matt! No gunplay now. . ."

BOOM TOWN

A Novelette by Thomson Burtis

DESPITE two extra cars, the accommodation train had passengers hanging from the platform. It was a cross section of a Texas boom town crowd, and the focal point of that crowd was the lean young man who occupied one of the side seats next to the door.

He had finally convinced some dozens of fore-handed roughnecks, lease-hounds, chiselers and dance hall girls whom he had known in various parts of the world that he had not gone high hat. He simply had to go over the pile of papers he had alongside him—and, like them, he knew no more regarding the likelihood of a boom than the San Antonio papers had published.

As his pencil finished flitting over a long column of figures, he leaned back and absent-mindedly rolled himself a cigarette. His hair had a reddish tint, and there was a touch of gold in the brown of his eyes.

"Pardon. Have I the honor of addressing Mr. Cary Rogers?"

The stocky questioner was bent into a stiff bow, and there was a guttural quality in his precise English.

"I don't know that it's much of an honor," grinned Cary.

"My card. My only excuse for both-

ering you is that I have money, and the desire to invest it properly. I should be willing to compensate an expert adviser liberally."

His heels clicked again as he presented an engraved card. It was inscribed simply: "Kurt Von Hoffman" in a script that was as continental as Mr. Von Hoffman's immaculate clothing and too-careful English.

"Glad to know you," Cary said easily. "Know the oil business?"

"I desire deeply to learn," smiled Von Hoffman. "May I venture the request for a few minutes conversation with you?"

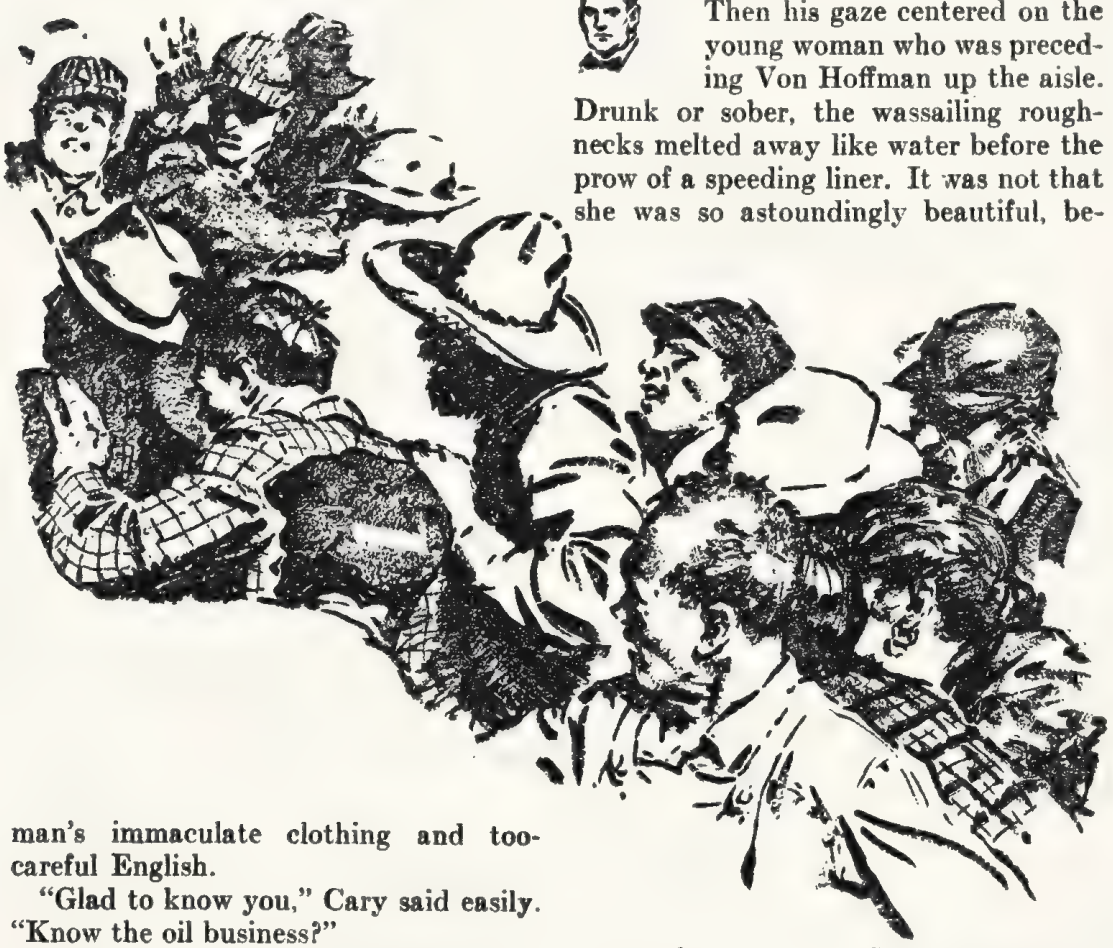
"Shoot," Cary told him, with a glance at the papers.

"And if you do not mind, I should like my sister, who accompanies me, to hear. One half of any money invested will be hers."

"Take it easy, *amigo*. Let her coast for a while," Cary protested. "I don't need any money, and I doubt whether there'll be a chance to invest anything in Gonalad. I—"

"Nevertheless, my sister will be interested. I go for her, to return in but a moment, with your permission."

Another bow, and the square, bullet-headed European was striding down the crowded aisle.



CARY observed it all idly. Then his gaze centered on the young woman who was preceding Von Hoffman up the aisle. Drunk or sober, the wassailing roughnecks melted away like water before the prow of a speeding liner. It was not that she was so astoundingly beautiful, because she was not. But she was an aristocrat.

Cary had a confused impression of high, Slavic cheekbones, wide, full lips, and blonde hair curling from beneath her toque, as he rose and bowed an acknowledgment of Von Hoffman's introduction.

"Sari too is much excited about the possibility of witnessing an oil boom," Von Hoffman smiled. "You will not mind if I ask you some questions, Mr. Rogers?"

"Not at all," Cary said as his long legs suddenly collapsed into a cross-legged squat on the floor in front of Sari. "But I can save you a lot of trouble by telling you the exact situation in Gonalad."

The girl leaned forward suddenly, gazing at his wristwatch band.

"Persian, is it not?" she asked.

Somehow curiosity, from her, became important. Cary held it up to her.

"Right," he said. "Been there?"

She nodded, but volunteered nothing more. To fill the awkward interval, Cary went on:

"Given to me. As a matter of fact, the watch itself is a common or garden variety of Connecticut turnip, but the case comes from Venezuela. I guess the strap and the case don't go together very well—"

"You have traveled much," Von Hoffman interposed, an appraising look in his disillusioned eyes. "May I ask whether you're married?"

"No."

"You have escaped, eh?"

"Well, I'll tell you," grinned Cary, very conscious of the silent young woman. "For a while I was too young. Then I was too busy. Now I'm too poor, and pretty soon I'll be too old."

"But wealthy, perhaps, which will keep you young," Von Hoffman remarked. "But you were going to tell us—"

"Right. Here's the thing in a nutshell. I'm a sort of sea-going oil man—been almost everywhere in the business since I was a kid right here in Texas. My best friend is an hombre named Matt Cooper, the Coopers being one of the first families that ever poked their noses into the Panhandle. So Matt owns a fifty thousand acre ranch just out of Gonalad. He's land poor, flat broke. I come back from Caracas, Venezuela, with some money I hadn't had a chance to spend yet because I was smuggled out of Venezuela on a freighter. A geologist friend of mine thinks there's oil on Matt's ranch. So I put up my last cent to drill a test well, and Matt puts up all his land. If there's oil, he and I go fifty-fifty."

"Very interesting," nodded Von Hoffman, legs wide apart and leaning on his cane.

"But here's the catch in it," Cary went on. "Of course, there may be no oil at all. Our first well will come in or turn out to be a dry hole within the next twenty-four hours. Even if there is oil, though, the chances are a million to one that the whole pool is on Matt's property. That's what all the rock-hounds say. Consequently, there being not a single star-spangled acre of Matt's land for sale, the only way bloated plutocrats like you and your sister could make a dime out of a boom would be to get in on the ground floor of some business in Gonalad."

"That is why all these people are already going to your town?"

"Most of 'em. Then of course there are a lot of oil men—drillers, roughnecks, tool-pushers and the like—who want to be on the ground for a good job. Then there are a bunch of big company men—well scouts, land men, and all that. See that fat, mousy little man with the horn rimmed glasses and his head resting on his tummy? Well, he's Manny Shaeffer, advance man for Tony Illetta, who is to the underworld of the oilfields what Capone used to be to Chicago."

VON HOFFMAN'S disillusioned eyes glittered a little as he stared at the flabby, loose-mouthed old man who was snoring gently, his bald head beaded with perspiration. Sari stared at her brother, as though trying to read his thoughts.

"He appears as harmless as a non-alcoholic drink," stated Von Hoffman.

"He's an illustration of what I mean. He's going to Gonalad to pick out suitable sites for Illetta's dance halls, gambling places, and what not," Cary told them. "There are representatives of San Antone stores, and all sorts of businesses,

prepared to take out an option on land or buildings, so they'll have a place to hang their hats if and when there's a boom."

"We are not business people, of course," Von Hoffman said stiffly.

"I gathered that," grinned Rogers. "But your trip won't be wasted if the well comes in. There's nothing quite like a boom town. Everybody with a lot of easy money, no law except your own gun or fists, work going on twenty-four hours a day and no saloon or restaurant or store ever closing its doors—"

"You said no law?"

Sari asked that question, and suddenly a vital force was glowing in her eyes.

"None to speak of," Rogers assured her blithely. "Take a look at this bunch here, multiply them by thousands, pack 'em together like sardines and figure all of them roaring drunk and a lot of 'em with guns in their kicks, and you've got the picture. If one guy with a gun kills another with a gun, who cares who started it? The minute it *is* started self-defense becomes a pretty good plea—"

"Get me a drink of water, Kurt, if you please," Sari interrupted.

"Of course. Excuse me." and Von Hoffman left.

"Tell me more, please!" begged Sari. She was transformed, as though an inner fire had melted her icy exterior.

She questioned Rogers with curious tension, and the more he told her of the frontier code which ruled an oil town, the brighter grew her eyes, the more natural her smile. By the time Von Hoffman returned with the water, she was feverishly gay. Rogers, who had taken his fun where he found it and often found it in curious places, was thinking as the train pulled into Gonalad:

"The kind of girl who goes to prize-fights and starts yelling when the blood begins to spout, eh?"

Somehow, though, he didn't quite believe it. He did believe, however, that he should see more of his new acquaintances. Kurt Von Hoffman was as unobtrusively interested in Manny Shaeffer and his boss, Tony Illetta, as his sister was in the impersonal question of lawlessness in general—and neither interest seemed in keeping with their outward appearance.

CONSEQUENTLY, within the next five minutes, Mr. Rogers was introducing the strangers to Mr. Matthew Cooper. Mr. Cooper bulked massively in the center of the swirling sea of townspeople and new arrivals. Rogers himself was an inch over six feet, but Cooper could look over his head. The younger man's shoulders were wide and sloping, but Cooper was almost as wide when seen from the side as Cary was from the front.

"How do you do?" rumbled Cooper in a creamy drawl. "I reckon maybe I'd bettuh see you all get rooms at the hotel. This old cattle town is sure in front of a stampede, and how they love it!"

Before the Texan had quietly blackjacked two rooms from the hotel man who simply didn't have two hall-ends vacant, both Von Hoffmans were scrutinizing him with a surprise amounting to awe. Many people felt that way when he was in action. Mr. Matt Cooper was the kind of a man who had serenely maintained his individuality as a Texas cow puncher all through Harvard, and with equal tranquility maintained his individuality as a university product on the plains of Texas. Both fused into a tranquil Gibraltar of a person who was likely to make even his intimates feel weak and ineffective alongside him.

"We aim to bring in the well or make sure she's dry this evenin'," he drawled pleasantly. "If there is a well, you might like to celebrate with us this evenin' in some champagne my daddy hid from my mothuh twenty-five years 'ago."

"You are too good to us," Von Hoffman bowed, which same sentiments animated the grinning Cary as he allowed Cooper to run interference for him

through the thronged lobby. Eager questioners bounced off Matt like water from the sides of a battleship.

"The pretty lady got you down?" he chortled as they got into the car.

"A friend of yours is a friend of mine," Matt grinned serenely. "Besides that, I don't myself I could work a claim you'd staked out, youngstuh."

"Don't be silly. But regardless of women, how's the well?"

Which important question occupied their exclusive attention as Matt threaded his way through the square which was the nerve center of town. It consisted of a scrubby mesquite park, bounded on all four sides by wide dirt streets which separated the alleged park from the false-front stores, restaurants and dwellings. The sleepy little town lay in the sun and dreamed of ancient glories—the days when the Cooper ranch had been an inland empire of two hundred and fifty thousand acres, and tens of thousands of cattle had been shipped from the rotting corrals around the depot, and hundreds of punchers had made Gonalad a name to roll under the tongues of all Texas.

When the two Southerners called for the Von Hoffmans that night, Gonalad was practically deserted. When they drove into the circle of light cast from the hundred and twelve foot derrick, the reason became clear. Every soul in Gonalad, visitor and resident alike, was in the crowd of two thousand people which stood quietly, in electric silence broken only by tense whispers. If the well came in there was a fortune for even the town bootblack.

Matt stripped to the waist, put on greasy coveralls, and took charge of as colorful a crew of roughnecks as ever sank a hole. The valve was on, the pipe ready to connect, the core had shown that they were down to the sand—

Half a mile down the belly of the earth seemed to turn over. A faraway rumble grew to a roar.

"Here she comes!" came Cary's vibrant shout and, as exultant roughnecks ran for their lives and the crowd shouted hysterically, the roar seemed to fill the universe. Then the gas belched forth in a white column, as though a safety valve had been opened to relieve resistless pressure in the center of the earth.

And on that reversed Niagara of gas rode a flood of oil blown into invisible drops by the force of it, drops of liquid gold which fell like blessed rain and turned the ground black for hundreds of yards around.

Men cried and shouted, women shrieked and fainted. Hundreds of them thrust out their hands to feel the oil, and laughed with joy as their clothes were ruined by it. Others flung themselves into automobiles and sped for telegraph and telephone.

Standing side by side, Cary and Matt were the calmest people there. Their eyes met, and then their hands.

"Nice going, squirt," drawled Matt. "Now you can raise the hell you've been deprived of recently."

"I'm glad this desert you owned turned out to be good for *something*," grinned Cary.

Over in Matt's car, Kurt Von Hoffman was watching them. Then his eyes swept the long line of speeding cars racing to spread the news to the world. His gaze met Sari's, and he wet his loose lips with his tongue.

He pointed his stick at the two Texans, who were just then being inundated by a wave of Matt's fellow-townsmen.

"There they are," he said grimly. "Two children with an oilfield for a playground —so naive that it will be only a toy for them. What an opportunity! You must lose no time."

Sari was gazing at the miniature riot seething around the Southerners. She was conscious of the not unpleasant odor of petroleum, mingled with the scent of chaparral and hay, the whole carried on brisk night air which had a clean crackle in it.

"You hear me?" snapped Von Hoffman.

The words were like thorns in a whip, and the girl suddenly became soft and lifeless. She nodded.

"What we have been waiting for!" gloated Von Hoffman. "It will be pleasant to savor life again, to watch this maelstrom grow bigger and more mad, to play for a fortune—"

"And gamble everything!"

The man glanced at her sharply. Then he smiled.

"I am glad to see the prospect pleases you, for once," he said precisely. "Ah, here they come. I wonder if they suspect that I am the champagne champion of the world?"

"No doubt they do not," she said contemptuously. "How could they know you have devoted your life to it—and what goes with it?"

"Sari!"

It was like a blow delivered so skillfully that its deadliness was not discernible save in its effect. It jarred contempt from her face, and only fear remained.

That was gone, too, and she was impassive as they greeted the mauled Texans. Cary's eyes blazed exultantly into hers.

"Champagne is poured," he grinned.

CHAPTER II

HIGH STAKES

AT TWO A.M. champagne was still being poured. At the moment, only two beakers of the beverage were being consumed. Matt and Von Hoffman had walked down to the bunkhouse to dig up some cards for a game of stud poker which none other than Von Hoffman had suggested. He had gone further, and implied that both he and his sister loved the game and could play it in a manner which would not make it fatal for them to play in a game with stakes proportionate to the good fortune which had overtaken the Texans.

As Cary poured a drink, he was wondering whether he was wrong in his feeling that during the entire evening Sari had gone out of her way to cultivate him. More than that, he was certain that her brother had cooperated efficiently to that end. That walk with Matt down to the bunkhouse, for instance. Von Hoffman might just as well have said aloud:

"I want to leave you two alone together."

Cary grinned to himself. He was not unaware of the magical manner in which money can increase the attractiveness of the male. The Von Hoffmans were playing for something, and Sari was their ace. And a very charming and exciting ace, at that.

Aloud he said:

"If you're as good a poker player as you are a drinking partner, you'll own the oilfield by sun-up."

"I suppose there's a good deal of gambling in a boom town, a lot of it dishonest," she remarked.

"Not so much dishonest," he told her. "They play for big stakes during a boom, and any hombre caught running a braced wheel or handling loaded dice might be caught by somebody who'd just lost a fortune, and that would be too bad."

"He'd be killed, you mean?" she asked, accepting her glass.

"Sometimes. Your very good health."

"Salute. Personally, I think that anyone who cheats at cards ought to be killed!"

Cary gazed at her oddly.

"Don't take it so seriously," he said easily.

"I mean it! Particularly in a game among friends. By the way, why do you and Matt carry guns?"

"Just forgot to take 'em off. Why?"

"I meant—why do you carry them at any time?"

"Oh, a lot of reasons—tonight, especially," Cary told her. "In the first place,

I'm carrying almost two thousand bucks. In the next place, Matt has had some threats from some squatters he had to throw off his property. Third and last, fair lady, they grow some pretty tough hombres in Texas and Oklahoma, and no one can tell who may be browsing around a new boom, getting funny ideas."

For a moment there was silence as they sipped their drinks. Then, suddenly, she walked to the door and looked searchingly around the huge living room. It was worth a look, with its bright Indian rugs, stuffed heads, and huge fireplace, but it seemed to Cary that she wanted to make sure no one was listening. And while he was admiring the way she looked in that severely simple gown, he noticed something else:

That gown was far from new. It breathed money—but money spent long ago.

She turned and walked toward him swiftly. She was tense, and her eyes were like magnets.

"There is something I must say to you," she said, her contralto voice a little huskier than usual. "I am putting myself in your power, perhaps—"

"Think twice," Cary said crisply, but he was as alert as a bird.

"You must never mention it, indicate it in any way. Please, Mr. Rogers, I beg of you to understand. Anything that I may do I am forced to do. I cannot help myself."

"You're still talking Greek," Cary said slowly.

"Perhaps. But please be on your guard!" she begged, and now her hands were gripping the coveralls, as though to keep him from turning away. "There are people who would stoop to anything to hurt you. When you discover those people, don't show them the mercy they would never show you."

"I see."

Cary methodically put out his cigarette, but his eyes did not leave hers.

"Listen, pretty lady," he smiled. "We are in Texas, U.S.A. We're in Matt's house, with twelve of his men down in the bunkhouse, and hundreds of his friends and mine all around us. It sounds like the second act of East Lynne to me—"

"Oh, why will you not understand me!" she pleaded. "I, too, am in danger—"

"Your brother?" Cary cut in tersely.

Her laugh was shrill.

"Of course not."

"Is he your brother?"

Cary fairly shot that question at her, and it rose to his lips without conscious thought. From the kitchen came Matt's voice, unwontedly loud.

She glanced at the kitchen. Then she whispered tensely:

"I am trusting you completely. No—he is not my brother!"

AN HOUR and a half later the twenty dollar take-out, table stake game had grown until there was a thousand dollars in chips on the table, and pots were running to two and three hundred dollars, new stacks being purchased constantly. Both the Von Hoffmans played like masters, but that was not the most interesting feature of the game.

Cary was sitting directly across from Sari, who was on Von Hoffman's right. Cary possessed a keen and experienced eye for crooked gambling, yet even he might not have comprehended the machinations of Von Hoffman had Sari not often looked at him understandingly, and done everything but announce what was happening.

Von Hoffman's method was simple, his skill astounding.

When he picked up the cards for his deal, it was in a manner which invariably separated with three cards a pair which had been showing. On top of the first pair-card there were sometimes two cards, sometimes three. This was done with such speed and nonchalance that

no one could have sworn it was done on purpose. He then shuffled the cards skillfully, never looking at them, but usually talking lightly. That shuffle, however, never disturbed the top ten cards.

He then performed a rapid double-cut. He put the bottom half of the deck on top, and then cut some cards out of the middle and put them on top. A half hour of steady observation made Cary certain that when the bottom half was placed on top, it was placed a little forward, leaving a little shelf. When Von Hoffman cut the cards out of the middle, he cut what had been the top cards of the deck originally, with the shelf as a guide.

He performed the double-cut like lightning, without looking at the deck. Then he would offer Sari a cut. Sari would almost invariably refuse. When she did not she, too, did the same double-cut, her eyes pleading with Cary for mercy.

"I call for a five minute recess to crack a new jug of champagne!" Cary said as he roped in a pot which Matt had dealt. "How about cracking some ice, Matt, while I pop a cork?"

Out in the kitchen cracking ice screened his words as he said swiftly:

"Can't talk much. There's cheating going on in there. No matter what I do, you sit tight and don't let your hot Texas blood get the best of you, because there's more in this than meets the eye!"

Which was perfectly all right with Matt Cooper.

With fresh beakers of the excellent beverage adorning the table, the game resumed. Somehow Cary could not enjoy to the full the pleasant thrill that a coming crisis usually aroused in him. There was something clammy and unclean in the situation: the pale, tense girl and her fear of the bullet-headed aristocrat, whose very body gave the effect of decay as liquor relaxed it.

Nevertheless, Cary pretended to be getting tight, and Matt did not need to do much acting to give the same impression. Cary was waiting for a really good opening, and Sari, as though despairing of the climax she was trying to force, gave it to him.

It was Von Hoffman's deal, and after his usual double-cut he offered the cards to Sari.

"Cut?" he barked.

Her face was a pallid mask as she put out her hand, and removed the top half of the deck. Von Hoffman gave no sign, although his face tightened. Then Sari replaced the cards and there was a catch in her voice as she said, as though involuntarily:

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut."

It was so clumsy a giveaway that Von Hoffman's face contorted. And Cary had the cue which would gracefully absolve Sari of blame.

"Just a minute," he said crisply, his voice crackling through the silence. He got to his feet, and leaned across the table. "Mr. Von Hoffman, you're a

crook and a rat who's being run out of this grain-bin right now!"

"SIR?"

Von Hoffman was on his feet, his face murderous. An instant of silence; then he threw the cards in his hand into Cary's face.

Suddenly Cary, his face dully flushed, was no longer playing a part. Sari's lips were parted, and she was leaning forward tensely.

"One more word out of you," Cary said slowly, "and, so help me God, I'll take you apart. Sit down!"

Von Hoffman, drawn proudly erect, did not move. Cary's fist smacked home to the European's jaw. There was little force behind it, for the table intervened, but nevertheless Von Hoffman collapsed in his chair. The golden flecks in Cary's eyes were flickering flames now, but Von Hoffman's contemptuous gaze never faltered.

"Now we'll demonstrate," Cary said tersely. "The top half of the deck didn't fall to pieces when he smacked me with 'em, as you see. You depended on the fact that your sister seldom cut the deck —or was afraid to. You had it fixed to deal yourself a pair of tens. I'll deal 'em."

Which he did and, as the damning proof fell face-up, the weeping Sari became half a Bernhardt, half a young woman who was not acting, but trying to save herself from some destiny she dreaded.

"This is the end, Kurt—the end, do you hear?" she sobbed, her hands gripping the table. "You'd be better off dead. Year after year I've had to go on, seeing my friends cheated and swindled, seeing you rot away into a thief and a—"

"Shut up!" shouted Cary, and a genuine case of hysterics died aborning.

The placid Matt, quiet as a beetle playing possum, had his gun in his lap. He was like a tranquil Colossus, waiting without impatience for lesser fry to play their little comedy to the end. Sari was gazing at him, wide-eyed, during the silence which no one felt moved to break. Then Cary said quietly:

"I'll drive you to your hotel. Miss Von Hoffman, if you want to think things over by yourself, you're welcome to stay here."

"She will go with me."

Von Hoffman's toneless statement was like the fateful tolling of a bell. It was as though the voice of some other person had spoken through his flaccid lips.

"Not that Matt and I want to break up any families," Cary stated, "but your sister will do as she pleases."

"She will go with me."

There was something hypnotic in the even repetition of those words.

"What do you say?" Cary asked quietly.

"I must go with him," she said, like an automaton from which every trace of feeling had been removed.

Not a word bridged the gap between Texas, in the front seat, and the Old World in the back, as Matt's car navigated the distance to town. The two friends felt no need for speech with each other. A poisonous miasma seemed to flow over them from the rear seat, and casual badinage was as unthinkable as a tap dance at a funeral.

It was little different after the Von Hoffmans had said a simple "good night" and entered the hotel: Kurt purposefully, Sari as though being led to the scaffold.

"You might give me the score," drawled Matt.

Cary brought his companion up to date.

"There are several ways to figure it," he concluded thoughtfully. "One is that she just doublecrossed her co-worker and probable sweetheart because you and I are about to dip into plenty of *dinero,* and she wanted to get in right with us. That would make this stuff about the danger we're in just a yarn, to make

things harder. The other side is that she's on the level, that this guy has got something on her and that she's scared to death of him and shot the works in an attempt to get out from under.

"He may be her brother, he may be her sweetheart, and he may be her husband. But you can lay to this, Matt, old boy: That girl's object in life is to get Von Hoffman bumped off, and this very night she tried to rib us into doing it!"

WHICH conclusion coincided exactly with the ideas of Mr. Kurt Von Hoffman. He was sitting motionless in a chair in Sari's room. His close-cropped hair topped a face which lack of sleep and a lifetime of debauchery combined to make a flabby, decadent mask. The silence was hideous with unspoken thoughts.

Sari was walking up and down, as though trying to keep herself under control. Finally he spoke, his voice more guttural than usual.

"You tried to have me killed tonight."

"I did not. I had drunk too much champagne."

"You sided with them—against me," he went on remorselessly.

"What else could I do?" she flashed, a sort of controlled wildness in her. "They had the proof! Don't you see that the only thing I could do to keep my own skirts clean was to pretend to be shocked? How could I ever become their friend if I was the aide of a cheap card cheat?"

"The word is shark in this country," he said sardonically.

He was playing with her, torturing her with sadistic delight.

"I don't care—"

"You seem to have forgotten that I can lift this telephone, and with a word have you under arrest. And if you flatter yourself that you would have the slightest chance for your life—"

"I don't flatter myself. I know, better than you."

"But if I, the only one who could give you away, should be killed in this wild town, what a pleasant prospect would open up for the beautiful Sari," he went on with relish.

Then, as though shuddering at the remembrance of Matt Cooper's gun, panic surged through him.

"Now listen," he said, speaking with difficulty. "Listen very closely, my little dove. One more chance I give you, because I am playing for millions, and you, too, have an appreciation of money. Either one of those oafs will be worth millions. Either one you could lead by the nose. Marry them! I shall so arrange matters that my death would be as fatal to you as to me. You understand?"

She nodded dully.

"Tomorrow I will move, and we will ostensibly have quarreled. You will have disowned me. I will give you one month, not more—"

"Have you gone completely mad?" she burst forth. "These men are not children—"

"My requirements are one month," he cut in. "You are fortunate, my beautiful snake, that I do not require more."

"Oh, no, I'm not," she said quietly. Unconsciously she drew herself up a little, as though some proud past had come back to her. "If you required more, Kurt, you know I would tell you to make your telephone call. You will please go, now?"

He stalked to the door, and then turned, leaning on his stick. In the shadows he looked a little like the handsome young nobleman who had once walked the boulevards of Vienna, Berlin and Paris.

He started to speak, but no words came. They merely stood there, looking at each other across the drab little room. There was something queenly about her, something pitiful about him, as both seemed to be gazing at the picture of what they once had been. For a moment it was as though some tiny, clean flame

in Von Hoffman had flickered fitfully through the physical decay and spiritual corruption which had almost snuffed it entirely.

Then he bowed.

"Good night," he said punctiliously.

He closed the door crisply behind him.

CHAPTER III

BLACK GOLD

PRECISELY a month later, arrived the beginning of the twenty-four hours which was to shake the roaring little world of Gonalad. And during that month Gonalad had changed.

On all four sides of the square, street and sidewalks alike were black with thousands of vehicles and human beings, flowing like cold glue. Saddle horses, wagons, trucks and five thousand dollar limousines literally rubbed together as they bumped and crawled over streets which were merely a collection of foot-deep ruts.

The town seemed to be quivering beneath shimmering heat waves; it would have been hard to find a coat among the swarming thousands who fought their way slowly along the sidewalks. The sluggish stream sent off constant backwaters which flowed in and out of every doorway on all four sides of the square. Not one foot of vacant ground could be found; where there had not been room to erect a flimsy frame building in the interstices between the permanent structures, tents had been set up. In every crevice there was at least a hot dog stand, or the bargain counter of some lease-hound.

Long queues of oil-splotched roughnecks, dead-pan gamblers, painted dance hall girls and big company executives waited patiently in line for the privilege of buying a hot dog for twenty-five cents. Every other doorway led into a saloon, gambling joint, or dance hall. The music of a hundred mechanical pianos fought with the sour product of a dozen orchestras and the blare of radios. Over the whole maelstrom floated a golden dust cloud, thickening air heavy with the smell of petroleum.

Directly across from the hotel, lording it over the hundreds of sleeping tents which dotted the park, was a huge frame structure more than three hundred feet long and almost as deep. It was unpainted, and above the street level two rows of largely shadeless and screenless windows added to its barrenness. Nevertheless, this was the nerve center of the boom, and the gaudy, dignified or sketchy signs which dotted its expanse wrote a story for all to read. And within its walls, at that very moment, conferences and observations were being made which were to have a stunning effect on the life of Gonalad, and the most prominent people in it.

Mrs. Leona Bexar leaned out of a window, underneath which was the sign:

MRS. LEONA BEXAR
OPTIONS, ROYALTIES, LEASES
BOUGHT—SOLD—SWAPPED.

She waved to Sari, and signaled that she would soon be over for their regular afternoon cup of tea which, in Mrs. Bexar's case, was strengthened somewhat with corn liquor.

The windows to her right, extending for almost a hundred feet, were not individually marked. Instead, that whole section of building, beneath which was a series of entrances each twenty feet wide, was devoted to the signboards of Mr. Tony Illetta. In massive letters ten feet high were the words:

TONY'S PALACE OF PLEASURE

Other signs advertised the best liquor in town, no limit gambling of every description, two hundred beautiful hostesses, three fifteen-piece orchestras, a burlesque

show "as you like it" presented every two hours on the even hour.

Adjoining this huge enterprise the windows were labeled with dignity, the sign under one group of six being:

OFFICES

MATTHEW COOPER AND CARY ROGERS

Behind the windows of the Messrs. Cary Rogers and Matt Cooper, those two gentlemen were just greeting the production managers and chief land men of three big companies. Behind Mrs. Bexar's window that angular lady was affixing an unexpected customer with a keen and hypnotic eye.

And somewhere in the depths of the catacombs behind Mr. Tony Illetta's flamboyant art work, that Sicilian bandit was entering the private chamber of Kurt Von Hoffman.

"How you feel? Not so good, huh?" smiled Illetta.

"Another cup of this coffee, and I shall be very fit," Von Hoffman told him stiffly, but his appearance did not make sense of his words.

In ornate bathrobe with slightly frayed sleeves, his feet in worn slippers and pouches hanging like two purple plums beneath his wornout eyes, he was as unwholesome as the air and the appearance of his room.

A thick rug was on the floor, littered with ashes; the wide and luxurious bed was dirty and tumbled; the light from the one window was so weakened by the dust which clung to the pane that a standing lamp was burning. The air was secondhand, like the sleazy and splotched luxury of the furniture.

MR. ILLETTA rolled his Corona between thick lips, and eased his bulky body into a chair. He looked fat, and was hard as a rock; he looked heavy and stolid, and was as alert as a humming bird.

One of Mr. Illetta's virtues was that he was not a hypocrite. From birth he had been a part of the business of vice. It was as natural, as completely devoid of any relationship to ethics or morals, as eating a plate of spaghetti. Of course, business methods were more direct than in other lines. One had to kill a man once in a while, instead of killing his business by cut-throat competition. One had to blackmail to keep the profits up, instead of cutting wages or quality of goods, but those were the methods necessary and sanctioned by generations of Illettas in the old country. One adapted one's methods to the conditions, that was all.

"You know, Von my friend, I am scared of you," Tony said genially.

"Sir?"

"Now, now—no offense, eh?" grinned Illetta. "I not forget who you are, Von. But I am very frightened of you."

"Are you inferring—"

"No, no," Illetta said soothingly. "But you see what I mean? You gamble against your own games. You flirt with your own dance hall girls. You are the gambler who plays a game when he knows it is crooked because it is the only one in town, eh?"

Von Hoffman was on his feet. He reached for his cane, as though he needed the physical evidence of it to be sure he was a gentleman. Illetta sat quietly, smiling with enjoyment.

"My hobbies are my own, and concern no one else," Von Hoffman said.

"Oh, sure, sure," Illetta agreed. "But you were born to be a sucker, and not a wise guy."

"I resent your intrusion, sir, and am not interested in your opinion."

"Sure, sure," nodded Tony. "But you see, Von, I am very interest', eh? You come to me and you make a business proposition. I say yes. I trust you. I put you in charge of the finest gambling rooms in all the South, because a man like you is right to meet the big shots that is all we have ever admitted into the big rooms, eh? I give you room and

the finest food, eh? And what do I find after one month? There is none of the money I am supposed to make as your —your sister—gets the fortune from Rogers or Cooper. Nothing happens. And you owe the house already ten thousand dollars which you have gambled and got credit for other things. You know, Von, if you had won the house would have pay. Tony Illetta always pay, or he would have been killed long ago. Tony Illetta is a big man in a tough crowd not only because he is tough, but because he always pays."

"I see."

Von Hoffman turned away, and lit a cigarette with a hand that shook from liquor, not from fear. Then he turned to face the lounging Illetta.

"It takes time, of course," he said precisely. "You have no doubt noted that my sister is constantly in the company of the two men, young Rogers especially—"

"A very tough nut to crack, that Cary," Illetta slid in. "He does not care for nothing. Now Cooper—"

"My sister and I must use our own judgment. We are playing for millions, do you understand?

"Sure, sure, I understand," smiled Illetta. "I also understand that Cary is maybe falling for your sister, but I would rather take Cooper. I also understand that Sari is not your sister."

"Sir!"

"Now, now," soothed Tony. "We are friends and partners, eh? So I tell you something. I do not know what goods you have on Sari, why she will do what you say when I know she hates you—"

"Illetta, I warn you to keep out of my affairs!"

"Sure, sure! But you have something on her, Von, which I do not know. But unless I see the color of your money right away I must know about Sari myself, because maybe you are too tender with her, no? I give you few more days, my partner. Then, if you do not want to tell me and let me handle the business—"

"Never!"

Illetta laughed as he got to his feet—a jolly, carefree laugh that rang through the room.

"But nevertheless I must have my money soon, or I must know. If you do not care to tell me, a few of the boys will take you into that room in the basement and work on you until you do tell me. Business is business, eh?"

He left, and walked down the hall.

AS Von Hoffman started to dress, Matt Cooper, at the head of a long table in a big barren room adjoining the business offices, leaned his two hundred and fifty pounds of bone and muscle well forward. His thinnish brown hair, neatly parted, was brushed back from his forehead and threw his big square face into jutting relief. Steady gray eyes swept the dozen men who were leaning back in unpainted kitchen chairs. He was serene and unflurried, his drawl slow and gentle, his lips smiling a little. Alongside him Cary was smoking, his aquiline face alight. He was like a boy watching a thrilling show.

"You gentlemen have been very smart in forming a pool," Matt smiled. "We country boys figured on having you-all biddin' against each other. Now you can't blame us if we want to be smart, too."

"God help us," said the executive vice-president of the All-Southern piously.

"We've sunk wells, some of 'em dry holes, on the limits of our acreage, and we've absolutely outlined the limits of the pool for you," Matt went on quietly. "We've shot the works from the day we sank ouah last dime and borrowed a little money to sink the first wildcat. You probably nevuh had a chance to buy a pool lock, stock and barrel that was proved up so thoroughly and accurately."

"We'll grant that. What's on your

mind?" barked the land man of International.

"We want to continue to gamble," Matt said serenely. "We're following our hunch through. We have no interest in selling out for a flat price that you would be justified in thinking you could pay, maybe. We can get the capital to run this whole field ouahselves, build the pipe lines, and all the rest of it."

"Suppose nobody'd buy your oil to refine?" a dried up little old man asked casually. He was one of the great oil men of the world.

"Somebody would," Matt said serenely. "If not, we can build our own refinery. Our capital is unlimited if we want to use it."

Cary was gazing at his confrere with delighted surprise. There wasn't a dollar of extra capital available, and Matt knew it. They had already gone their limit.

"But," Matt went on easily, unwrapping a stick of gum, "we would prefuh to deal with you gentlemen. Whether wildcats on other people's property will come in makes no difference, except to make it more advisable for you gentlemen to be on the ground. We value our holdings at ten million dollars. You say you won't pay that. Our proposition, then, is five million dollars in cash, and a one-eighth royalty on every barrel taken out."

He arose.

"Let us know within twenty-four houahs," he drawled. "Shall we meet again tomorrow at the same time?"

This being agreed, Messrs. Cooper and Rogers left their offices to allow the oil men to go into a huddle then and there.

"Whew!" grinned Cary as they went down the steps. "That was nice talking if they *don't* believe it. Let's have a drink, shall we?"

In the raucous din of Billy Squibb's bar, privacy was assured. They could not hear themselves if the speaker's mouth was more than six inches from the listener's ear. "I've been thinking about Sari," Matt said slowly. Cary's head was bent to hear. "Got any serious intentions there, Don Juan?"

Cary shook his head.

"Nary one. Why?"

"Then lay off, will you?" Matt drawled, his finger tracing wet pictures on the bar. "I'd like to marry her."

"Huh?"

Cary stared at his companion in utter astonishment.

"You heard me. I've got it bad, son."

For a moment there was silence. Then Cary, unwontedly serious, spoke hesitantly.

"Thought it over—pretty carefully, Matt?" he asked, and Matt nodded. "Mind if I say something?"

"Speak your piece."

"It's—it's just this," Cary said haltingly. "Don't get me wrong. I started in on the basis that I was running around with the best looking girl in town—the ex-sweetheart of a broken-down swindler. The more I've seen her the bigger and better she gets, and in another week I'll be figuring that she was a queen that ran away to be a nun. She's the most interesting and pitiful and mysterious girl I ever met. I admit all that. But Matt, old boy, you've been stuck here in the brush for a long time. You're easy pickings. You don't know who she is; you don't know anything about her that isn't bad except her—her personality, so to speak. Don't you think you ought to go slow?"

Matt shook his head.

"I've waited a long time. I'm no fool. She's a lady, and anything she was worried into doing before she met me was done like a lady. And she's a bettuh judge of what's right than I am. I'll marry her if I can."

"Which reminds me that I've got a date to tour the town with her tonight and show her the high spots. Mind?"

"Don't be silly," smiled Matt. "I reckon that in yeahs to come I'll be calling on you to substitute for me in many a dance or whatnot."

"Sure. And good luck." Cary raised his glass. The clatter and roar of the milling saloon might have been a thousand miles away. "To the Matt Coopers!"

He almost added: "God forbid!"

AT THAT precise moment, Kurt Von Hoffman was preparing to leave Sari's room. There was no weakness in him now. He had hit bottom, and knew it. There was no turning back now. That knowledge, and her hatred of him, combined to make him merciless.

"One week," he repeated. "And you will concentrate on Cooper. Any woman like you could rule Cooper. Rogers, as has been amply proven, rules most women. Good day."

The door had scarcely closed behind him before it bounced open to reveal Mrs. Leona Bexar. Reticule in hand, horn-rimmed glasses twinkling and snapping with curiosity, the efficient old pioneer sailed in like a gargoyle on stilts.

"I couldn't help but hear part of it," she snapped. "Now put some rouge on, set down in that chair, pull yourself together, and tell me all about it. What has that bad-smellin' furriner got on you?"

"I can't tell you."

"I don't know what you've got to lose," Mrs. Bexar remarked tartly. "Do you know what he's made you around this town?"

"I have some idea."

"You're a high class foreign Jezebel, that's what they think of you, with a sweetheart that you split from to gold-dig Cary Rogers and Matt Cooper. The idea—a nice girl like you that I've lived next door to for a month and know is as straight as a string!"

She walked over to the girl, and one bony hand caressed the blond hair.

"I'm your friend, child. Tell me what you want to. Who is he, and what is he to you?"

"I don't mind telling you that," Sari said slowly, staring at the wall as though a picture of the past was on it. "A few years after the war he was my fiance. He was young and a war hero then."

"Then what? Did you marry him?"

"No. I found out what he really was—and ran away."

"I see. And he caught up with you."

Mrs. Bexar had not bossed her dead husband's ranch more efficiently than he had been able to manage it himself, and found time to make herself a fortune in oil leases besides, because she was a shrinking violet. Whenever she spied a point, she was not in the habit of sneaking up on it. So she said:

"He must have a halter on you somehow. What is it?"

"I can't tell you."

"You can tell me to mind my own business, but it won't do you a speck of good," Mrs. Bexar informed her. "Maybe you'll tell me this. You're fooling around with Matt Cooper and that good-for-nothing Cary because you reckon they can help you get rid of that furriner, ain't you?"

"I'm very fond of them both," Sari said in frightened self-defense.

"I ought to know—I've paddled 'em both in their time. What hellions they were when they were kids!" Mrs. Bexar told her with reminiscent satisfaction. "And if you don't use 'em you're crazy. And listen to an old woman, child."

She was brusquely tender, as though pleading with Sari for understanding.

"I was once the belle of the Panhandle myself—not that I had much competition. There wasn't another unmarried female inside a hundred miles. Anyway, I run off and married a black-haired boy that turned out to be a half-Mexican cattle rustler. He wasn't worth powder enough to start a bullet on its way, but many's the time I looked at the pearl-handled gun I had then with my trigger finger itching. I wish I had as much sense then as I got now. I'd have been shut of him two years before I was."

"You really felt that way?" Sari asked slowly.

"Sure. Women have gone through the same things I guess, since the beginning of time."

"How would you have felt if you—had killed him?"

"I'd have probably cried myself to death, then. Now I'd get drunk."

Mrs. Bexar marched over and seated herself on the arm of Sari's chair. She took the younger woman's face, in bony fingers, and stared down into her eye.

"We women've got to stick together," she said quietly. "Matt Cooper's your man. He's got all the power there is in this part of the country. Friends from the State House right down to the lousiest halfbreed over on the flats. So tell me. Are you ashamed of whatever it is you've done?"

Sari twisted her head out of Mrs. Bexar's hands, as though she could not bear that penetrating gaze any longer. Pent-up emotion was struggling for escape.

"Oh, I can't!" she gasped. "It's—it's more than just a crime. And I didn't know—I swear I didn't know—"

"You poor, poor baby."

And Sari wept as the old pioneer had never seen a woman weep.

SHE regained her self-control as quickly as she had lost it, and Mrs. Bexar was wise enough to help her renew her appearance without conversation. Rather, she clucked like a comforting old hen, and withal exuded such an air of grim competence that Matt Cooper entered an atmosphere which the storm had washed clean.

"Ready for that inspection of the field, sugah?" he drawled. "Care to chaperone, Aunt Leona?"

"Don't call me aunt!" barked Mrs. Bexar affectionately. "Run along, and try to remember you're a Harvard man, God help us!"

A moment later they were making their way down crowded stairs, and then Matt cleared the way through a lobby packed with a solid mass of men. Lining the walls were partitions made of hung blankets, behind which dozens of men slept in their clothes on cots which rented for five dollars per eight hours.

There was little opportunity for conversation while Matt snaked his car through the congealed traffic of the town, and finally fell into the endless line of loaded trucks, tool-pushers, wagons and flivvers which crawled to the field.

Once into the center of operations, conversation was absolutely impossible. The rigs clanked loudly; red-mouthed boilers roared, the noise of a hundred motors competed with the ceaseless clink of metal on metal as hundreds of roughnecks, stripped to the waist, toiled like gnomes on the derrick floors. Somewhere in the distance a roar like that of Niagara announced the location of a well with such terrific gas pressure that the stream had been diverted to spend itself against a vertical concrete wall. All the oil saved from that well flowed down the wall in a greasy sheet. Huge sumps—basins dug in the earth a thousand feet square—contained lakes of oil for which no storage tanks were available.

It was an inferno, but a stark, clean-smelling, gargantuan thing which was beautiful and impressive in its unremitting ugliness and raw power.

Matt was watching the girl alongside him. From toque to slippers and from background to birthright, she represented the exact antithesis of the life around her. And he was glad as he saw her lips parted and her eyes aglow with the stimulus of it. She was not anaesthetized to the things of earth, which gave the deceptively contained Southerner the courage to speak as they traversed a comparatively tranquil area.

"Think you can stand all this much longer?" he asked gently, his eyes straight ahead.

"I love it. There's strength and life and—"

"Sweat and blood and fun," he smiled. "I had an idea that you wouldn't care much for Texas, or the people in it."

"Generalizations are always dangerous," she replied. "You seem to have something definite on your mind, Mr. Cooper."

Matt kept his eyes straight ahead. His full, square face was a dull red below the tan, and he drove with exquisite care.

"I reckon I have," he drawled. "What's on my mind is to ask you to marry me."

IT HAD come with such deceptive gentleness that the paralyzed Sari could not speak. Her mind was a chaos which she could not resolve into coherent thought. It couldn't be true. Opportunity could not knock so casually.

"Seems sort of hard for you to say anything," Matt said quietly. "I certainly hope I haven't embarrassed you—"

"Of course not," she said breathlessly. "But—but I don't know what to say."

"The word 'no'," stated the Texan, "is short and very easy to pronounce."

"But I don't want to say no!"

The car swerved perilously over a shallow ditch, and drew up out of the line of traffic. Matt turned behind the wheel.

"I reckon we'd bettuh talk it right through, honey," he said slowly. "I've put my cards on the table, face up, for the whole world to see. I figure you owe it to me to do the same."

"I know I do," she said, her words as quiet as his own. "But, Matt, I can't."

"Oh yes, you can. It's Von Hoffman. What about him? I didn't ask before I asked you to marry me."

She looked straight into his steady gray eyes.

"I know you didn't. And that puts you on a level all by yourself, Mr. Matt Cooper. And I'll answer you as frankly as I can. Kurt isn't my brother, my husband, or my sweetheart. He never has been any of those things. Nevertheless, I can never marry anybody as long as he is alive."

"I had an idea there was something important behind a cheap card shark being able to make a girl like you try to get him killed," Matt said thoughtfully. "How about telling your future husband all about it?"

His smile was like the sun coming out, warming her. But her strained face was white, her lips tight and drawn as she said:

"I want to—but I can't, Matt. You see, the minute I did, I would be absolutely in your power too. Don't misunderstand me, please! I trust you and Cary as I've not trusted anyone since—since it happened. Once I would have trusted my life to Kurt. And—I can't trust anybody any more."

"I unduhstand. And I'm no angel," he said quietly, narrowed eyes gazing into the distance.

"I will tell you this much," she said finally, as though the words were dragged from her. "I'm not exaggerating the—the tragedy. It sounds melodramatic and—and unbelievable, but it's a matter of international importance."

"I see," he said, without surprise. Then he added musingly: "It so happens that there are three Texans in Washington that draw a lot of watuh. They're friends of mine."

"Nothing could save me, Matt, believe me, as long as Kurt is alive and able to talk. And he will, unless I dance to his tune. It isn't a love tune any more, but a blackmail tune that would ruin my life and the life of any man I married."

He turned again, and looked at her searchingly. She found herself able to meet those candid eyes.

"Nothing having happened to change my ideas about you," he said slowly, "I

see no reason to copper my bets on you. I am a man of peace and quiet, sugah, but I see no reason why a man who tried to cheat me at cards, makes his living the way he does, and aims to blackmail me and the woman I love on top of all the rest, shouldn't be dealt with pronto."

For a second she could not believe it. Then, somehow, she found herself saying tensely:

"What are you going to do? You mustn't get in trouble or danger over me—"

"I am certainly not aiming to spend my honeymoon in jail, and I have no intentions of being killed as a bachelor," he said quietly.

He started the car. He did not offer to kiss her. Instead he patted her gently with his huge paw.

"We're engaged?" he asked shyly.

"Yes," she said breathlessly.

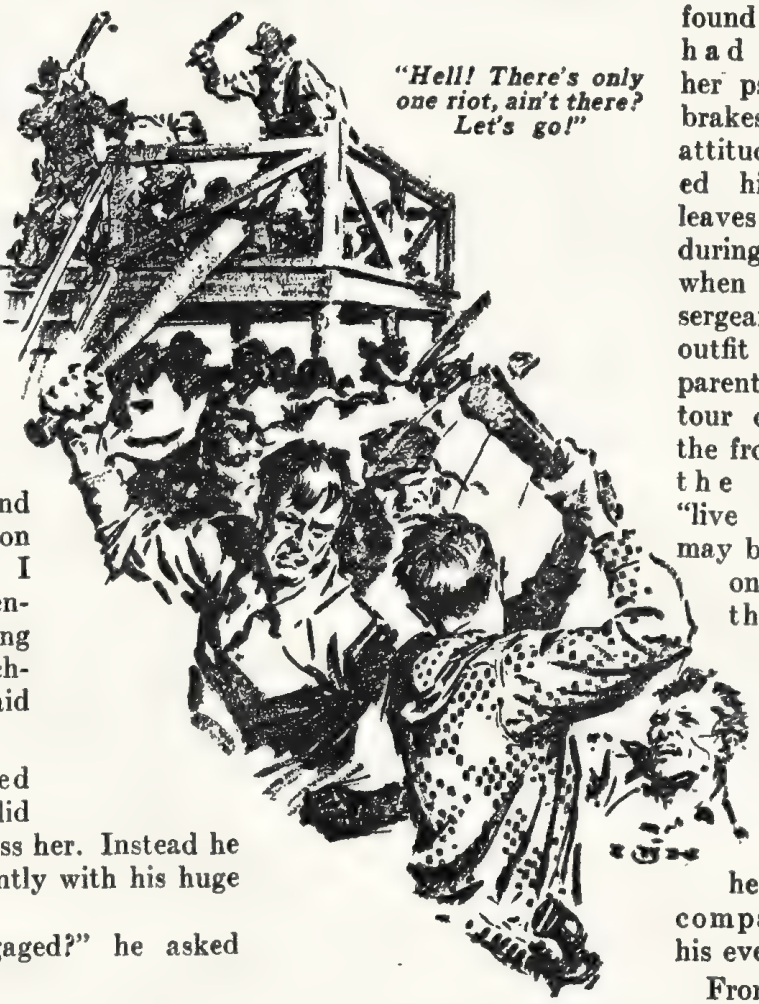
"I thought you liked Cary," he said.

"I do, terribly," she said quickly. "He's a lot of fun, and so—so gay—"

"I know. But we're engaged?"

It was as though he was not sure, had to be reassured like a boy afraid of something in the dark that he could not see.

"Yes," she repeated—and wondered why she cried when she was back in her room once more.



"Hell! There's only one riot, ain't there? Let's go!"

CHAPTER V

HUNTED

THAT evening, from its inception, was one which was never to be forgotten by Cary. The big redhead was in a curiously reckless mood, and to his surprise found that Sari had taken off her psychological brakes, too. His attitude reminded him of his leaves in Paris during the war, when he was top sergeant of an outfit with an apparently endless tour of duty at the front. It was the feeling of "live tonight—it may be your last one." And in the cryptic girl whose feverish gayety always had a hint of fear in it, he found a companion for his every mood.

From Illetta's hundred and fifty foot bar to Old Billy Squibb's joint, from the places where they rubbed elbows with the dance hall girls to remote dives where they fed drinks to piano players who had played, drank and drugged their way from the Yukon to the Tampico "Union"—they patronized them all. And everywhere they accepted the bartender's special, whatever it might be, because Cary Rogers rated eager respect and fawning attention anywhere in Gonalad.

It was one o'clock in the morning when Cary escorted her through the lobby. He patted the bottle of whiskey in his pocket.

"Can you spare me another half hour to get properly tanked?" he inquired. "I would have been a rich man in my early youth, punkin, if I'd ever been able to go to bed o' nights."

"Come on up," she said, as the clerk handed her a key. "It will take me half an hour to settle down myself."

The clerk handed her a message.

"Matt called me an hour ago," she told Cary as they went up.

"I always take my first and last drinks and most of the drinks in between to Mr. Matthew Cooper," Cary stated. "All heart, some brains, and no faults!"

At the moment when they were entering Sari's room, the gentleman who had been so roundly toasted lounged up to the desk in the lobby.

"Miss Sari in yet?" he asked genially.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Rogers and Miss Sari just went up."

"I won't go up now, then, but as soon as he goes will you tell her to call me at the office? It's important."

He felt a little silly as he walked away. There was no reason in the world for him not to go up and see her now. He'd have died, though, rather than have her or Cary think he was keeping tabs on them.

So he stopped at Billy Squibbs' for a drink. He had plenty of things to revolve in his mind, uppermost being Mr. Kurt Von Hoffman.

He stood at the street end of the bar. The crowd was thinning, now that the four-to-midnight shift of roughnecks were concluding their libations and staggering off to bed. There was no clue to the time of day or night in Gonalad, except for dawn and dusk. Three shifts worked twenty-four hours a day out in the field, and one third of the town was playing all the time.

He glanced up at Sari's window. He saw the shadows of Cary and the girl. They were facing each other, glasses in hand. Cary's shadow bowed meticulously. His glass was lifted high. Hers followed. Then they drank.

Matt grinned to himself, although he was conscious of a twinge of loneliness, as though he was being left out of something. Cary was drunk enough to be toasting again, he reflected. If he was, the chain of them was endless.

He took another drink. The hotel clerk looked out the window, and saw him standing there. A bellboy came by, and the clerk couldn't resist relaying a choice morsel of gossip about the two biggest men in town. So the bellboy grinned wisely at the patient Matt waiting across the street while Cary Rogers was beating his time upstairs with the aid of a pint of whiskey. The bellboy, a thirty-year-old resident of Gonalad who figured Matt and Rogers were lucky stiffs anyway, found the story interesting in the various rooms where he went in line of duty.

So it came about that the news was spreading around the town while Matt drank slowly and mused pleasantly at the bar. He practically forgot his errand in the balmy flow of his day dream. For twenty long years he had fought a lonely and losing fight on the outskirts of Gonalad, his only social diversion an occasional trip to San Antone or Austin. Then he couldn't afford even that. Womanless and moneyless and alone—and now he was rich, and had Sari. He was forty-two and wanted a home.

It was a little after four o'clock when he glanced up at the still lighted window. He was just in time to see the light go out.

Behind that telltale shade, Cary had just passed out in the one comfortable chair. For seven solid hours he had been taking medicine to ease some restless-

ness within him, and finally it had taken effect.

Sari tried to arouse him, but could not. She was dead tired, so she turned out the light, slipped into a robe in the dark, and fell asleep on the bed.

DOWN on the street a hundred men who had heard what was going on had seen the shadowed tableau. And at the end of Billy Squibb's bar Matt Cooper was quietly ordering another drink in a manner that made the bartender slide it to him wordlessly, and retreat. A half hour later the sheriff strayed in, as though by accident, and started ordering a slow series of lemonades. And as the streets filled with the eight o'clock shift getting their breakfasts, and the advance guard of the shift going off began surging into town to turn early morning into a carnival that would have done credit to midnight in a more normal municipality, scarcely a waking soul in Gonalad but knew that Matt Cooper was waiting for Cary Rogers.

It was just after eight when a stiff neck awakened Cary in his chair. He stared around the room, grinned, and got up. Cold water, applied both internally and externally in the bathroom down the hall, helped considerably. He reentered the room to get his coat, but quietly as he had moved, he awakened Sari.

"Good morning, God forbid," he grinned, being one of those steel and whipcord people whose stomach and liver are disgustingly normal. "Thanks for the use of the hall."

She was staring at the ceiling.

"Listen, Cary," she said. "There is something I must tell you—and something that you will think cheap and disloyal that I want to ask you to do."

"The details, madam," he smiled. "May I use your comb if I wash it carefully?"

"Of course, but listen first. Innocent as we were in thought and deed, and tight as we were—I still don't want you to mention this to Matt."

Cary sobered quickly.

"I know," he said slowly. "And I won't. I feel like hell keeping anything from him—"

"I am engaged to marry him," she interrupted quietly.

"So quick?" he barked.

"It happened yesterday afternoon," she said.

Cary was curiously upset.

"Love him?" he asked mechanically.

"I'm terribly fond of him," she said steadily. "I know how close you are and —oh, Cary, it would be terrible for both our sakes if we hurt him."

"I suppose you're right," Cary agreed, as he got to his feet. "Right now I can't argue with anything but breakfast. But it's pretty stupid for two people who think as much of a man as we do of him to have to start out by lying to him. And, in case you don't know it, I've never felt worse in my life. I wonder why."

With which question he left her, and thought it was only his guilty conscience which made it seem that the lobby fell silent as he entered.

Emerging to the street, he was puzzled to notice that the clotted stream of traffic barely moved, that a thousand people seemed to be waiting for something—

Then Matt sliced through the crowd on the opposite side of the street like a tank through tissue paper, and he knew.

For a moment the slim Texan wanted to run away and hide. Matt's face was white; the flesh had gathered around his eyes until they were mere pin points. He walked forward without haste, like a slow motion picture of a charging bull.

One look at the rancher's face had told Cary the whole story. When the rarely plumbed depths of Matt Cooper were whipped into a storm, there just were not storm cellars strong enough to save

one. And there is no basis of discussion with a wounded grizzly.

Nevertheless, Cary walked forward to meet him.

As Matt reached the curbstone, the sheriff caught up with him. The crowd was pressing back behind the two men, scurrying out to the line of bullets.

"Matt! No gunplay now—"

The giant's right arm flicked out sideward. The sheriff would have sprawled on the sidewalk had the crowd not been a solid wall to save him.

Cary felt himself shriveling before the heat of Matt's hatred, but the contempt in the rancher's face was harder to endure.

"Matt, there was nothing wrong. I didn't know—"

He could go no further, and Matt didn't answer as he towered over his one-time friend. Finally he did speak, staring at Cary with eyes like two pieces of ice.

"Sort of enjoying your money, aren't you?" he drawled. "Think you can afford her? She must not think so, playing us both that way. You've been around so many bums, maybe you know more about it, though, than I do."

Sheriff Young was not a timid man, but he touched Matt as though the rancher was poisonous.

"Matt," he begged, "No gunplay now—"

"Gunplay," Matt laughed. "A man uses a gun on somebody he respects, and not from the back, either."

For a moment there was silence. The crowd scarcely seemed to breathe. The sheriff's face was drawn and haggard. Up in her window, Sari, her eyes pools of tragedy, could watch no longer.

It was Cary who broke it. He talked with difficulty, as though neither his tongue nor his brain could function.

"Matt, you've got her and me wrong. Let's talk about it when you're more yourself. I don't blame you—"

Matt laughed, and started to turn away. Cary put out his hand to stop him. Cooper whirled, and his right fist came over in a vicious right cross.

Cary saw the blow coming. He could have avoided it as easily as he could have outboxed Matt. Nevertheless, the younger man did not move. He almost thrust out his jaw to take it, and went down as though dead.

IT WAS at noon, precisely, when Matt's second blow fell.

Into the field offices of Cooper and Rogers marched a serious sheriff, backed by a half dozen deputies. He thrust a sheaf of blue-covered papers into Cary's hands. Mr. Katydid Knott, tobacco-chewing driller, chewed a little faster and inquired:

"What might they say, stranger?"

"Plenty," grunted the sheriff. "Matt's a-suing Cary here, as his partner, claiming that Cary ain't lived up to his part of the partnership on account of various things specified—and right, too, I guess, if yuh want t'be legal."

"I see," Cary said quietly. "Lots of fun, eh?"

"But that ain't the half of it," Young went on.

The deputies shifted uneasily.

"He's got a court order stoppin' all production in this field until the ownership of the oil is adjudicated by the courts. The boys here and me are postin' notices on all wells, stoppin' 'em until further notice—"

"Great God!" Knott squawked excitedly. "Why, that court action can take five years with appeals and that stuff—"

"And Matt's got all the influence there is," Cary cut in absently.

"You boys better git together," Young told Cary. "Or here goes the field. Come on, boys."

Cary was staring miserably at the map-covered wall of the barren little inner office. Knott spat again.

"Well, this here's a new one on me,"

he stated to the geological map of the field just above Cary's head. "This here's a boom town that can't boom!"

FOUR days later, three gatherings of widely differing people served to prove that minds of many kinds move in the same channels.

At twelve-thirty P. M. the Gonalad Chamber of Commerce held a special luncheon meeting, to which had been invited Sheriff George Young, now in possession of the floor.

"Up till a couple of days ago, as you felluhs know," he was saying, "Everybody kind of took the thing as a joke, took their holiday and just raised hell and had fun. Then all of a sudden everybody ran out o' money, and had nothin' to do, and it started t' git tough. Nobody want t' git out because they figger any day them two damn fools'll git together and call off that law suit and the town'll open up again.

"For the last two days the situation's been gittin' worse by the minute. You got a few thousand o' the toughest galoots in God's creation here, plus another couple o' thousand of ordinary criminals. They got nothin' to do, and no money. Everybody's exchangin' I. O. U.'s and everybody'll be starvin' to death in another few days. Lootin's started, and the town's at the boilin' point. You can't pack ten thousand rattlesnakes in a sardine box and not have somebody git bit.

"I've sent for some rangers already. I tell yuh that in another couple o' days Mexia and them towns that had to declare martial law and bring in the militia will be sewin' circles alongside o' Gonalad, and there ain't enough citizens in this town to set on the lid an' keep it from blowin' off!"

As he sat down, Lawyer Adams arose and rapped for order.

"There you are, gentlemen," he said. "Furthermore, every man here is losing a small fortune daily because of this ridiculous situation. Nothing can be done with those two men as long as that woman is in town!"

"Right!" "Now you're talking!" came voices from the floor, and Adams bowed complacently and rapped for order.

"We have discovered that Mrs. Leona Bexar paid the Von Hoffman woman's hotel bill. She is broke. I am suggesting that a purse be raised by this organization, and a committee be appointed to wait on her and present her the money to leave town. Then, and only then, will these two friends be brought together—then and only then will the boom go on!"

Another and a louder voice was declaiming to somewhat the same end in the basement of a church one block away, and as the checks from the Chamber of Commerce fluttered on the table, the Reverend Ebenezer Elliott had reached his peroration to the select group of brother pastors and more solid sisters and brothers grouped before him.

"And I say to you!" he shouted, "That this scarlet woman, this daughter of Belial, this Jezebel must be labored with, prayed with, yea, if necessary, dealt harshly with, to the end that our city be cleansed of its shame; that our institutions be allowed to function for the good of all and the glory of God; that our wives and children be not allowed to look upon vice crowned with gold; that our two beloved fellow-citizens be shown the error of their ways and returned to the path of love and friendship, freed of the snares of the sinful!"

"Amen!"

And as the embattled stalwarts of the Lord sallied forth to their homes, after a bitter contest for places on the committee of three to wait upon Jezebel, the third and most businesslike meeting was being held under the chairmanship of Mr. Tony Illetta.

Grouped in Mr. Illetta's suite in the catacombs of his huge place of business,

where anything could happen and most things did, were four of Illetta's lieutenants. Kurt Von Hoffman was there, too. So were two of Illetta's bodyguards.

"All right," said Illetta. "Here are the lists of all the joints in town. Opposite each name is what I want them to throw in the pot. You tell them that I, Tony Illetta, contribute two and a half grand, and I guarantee we get the dame out of town. Tell them if they do not it will be too bad."

The four underlings left, leaving Von Hoffman and the two bodyguards.

"Smart, huh?" laughed Illetta delightedly. "I get ten grand from the boys, and I get her out of town for nothing."

"May I ask what you intend to do?" asked the brooding Von Hoffman stiffly.

"Sure, sure!" Tony chuckled happily. "I have no secrets. You will tell me what frightens her so much. I will then frighten her out of town. Then, later, after those two suckers get together, we bring her back and we pull the same racket with her on one of them—"

"You will do no such thing," grated Von Hoffman.

"Now, now," soothed Illetta. "So what you got on her, huh?"

Von Hoffman did not answer.

"So?" laughed Illetta. "The boys have to take you downstair' and stick little things under your fingernails and—"

"I do not intend to be tortured," Von Hoffman said, tight-lipped. "But I do intend to get this field running and get a hundred thousand dollars besides within twenty-four hours. Do you realize we're playing for millions? Do you realize that if she didn't have these men in the hollow of her hand that this would never have happened?"

"Maybe so, maybe not," shrugged Illetta. "Anyway, you tell Tony everything, anyhow, so he knows where he is at. You go out, boys, and wait outside the door—"

"No!"

Tony laughed heartily.

"You are a sucker. You are going to tell me anyway. So you got to be knocked around and waste time and scream your head off before you tell, eh? Change your mind?"

"No. For the next twenty-four hours I handle it myself. If I fail I will tell you everything."

"Stall for time, huh, and run out on me? Take him away, boys."

As the strong-arm men moved, Von Hoffman backed against the wall. A gun appeared in his hand, and his contemptuous eyes were unafraid. He had reached back, and come up with the remnants of what he once had been.

The three Italians were motionless. Illetta was smiling with delighted interest. Von Hoffman spoke almost casually.

"If I do not handle it my own way, I will be ruined. I would rather kill myself than have that happen. I would rather kill myself than be tortured. If I weakened and told you, I would still lose. If I did not, this is a more pleasant way to die."

Illetta turned to his men.

"You know, I believe him." He turned to Von Hoffman. "Why you think Tony Illetta could do nothing? You tell me why, huh?"

It was Von Hoffman who was dominating the gathering now, and he did not pull his punches.

"Because if you, or anybody like you, dared to make a proposition to Rogers or Cooper, they'd squash you like a cockroach!" he snarled. "They'd run you and your vermin out of Texas if they didn't lynch you first. And if you dared lay a hand on them, the Texas Rangers would follow you to the lowest hole you could find in Milan or Turin—and you know it!"

Illetta was not smiling now.

"You handle it, then, but you tell me all the details, eh?"

"No. If I die in the next few hours, the secret dies with me. So make your decision, Tony."

Illetta stared at him with beady eyes. He was a peasant, and Von Hoffman a nobleman. So the Italian shrugged.

"You win. Twenty-four hours," he said, and then his whole body heaved as he laughed.

He turned to his impassive underlings.

"See?" he chortled. "See how he is? He's a foreigner, but I like him! Me, Tony Illetta—I am a sucker for a screwy count, eh?"

IT was not coincidence which was responsible for the fact that the three Gonalad delegations found themselves in Sari's room at one and the same time. The news of what was afoot had leaped from lip to lip along Gonalad's dangerously jammed streets—into saloons, out to the idle fields, into every home. Tony Illetta had planned his call to coincide with his fellow-delegates, for his own amusement. A ribald soul was Tony, who enjoyed almost anything.

He was taking his ease in the most comfortable chair in the room, now, as he listened with naive enjoyment to Lawyer Adam's tactful speech to the girl. Outside, the square was a swarming anthill of men and women who had nothing else to do. Their mood was not ugly. The town fathers could handle the situation, and soon the boom would go on. Nevertheless, had the paralyzed girl been able to overhear the witticisms of the Rabelaisian mob, her already full cup would have overflowed long before it actually did.

Mrs. Leona Bexar was watching from her office window. Three times she reached for the telephone, but something held her back.

"And so, Miss—er—Von Hoffman," Adams concluded pompously. "Surely you must see our point." He turned to the Reverend Elliott, who had planted himself in front of a sister and brother of mature years, as though to shield them from contamination. "The parson did not mean to offend you. Neither do we. We have only the best interests of yourself, the two men, and the whole town at heart. To show that, I am empowered to present you, as a token of our appreciation of your cooperation in leaving Gonalad, with this gift of two thousand dollars."

He offered her a thin sheaf of hundred dollar bills. For a moment Sari stared at him, as though in a daze. Then her eyes blazed with fury, but her expression did not change. Deliberately she turned her back on Adams.

"I told you!" roared Elliott. "This—this woman's price is higher than anyone but Rogers or Cooper can pay—"

"Shut up!" snapped Mr. Tony Illetta, and the minister obeyed.

Tony bounced to his feet.

"Now listen, lady—"

"I have listened—all I care to," Sari said. She was calm, but her calmness seemed to be that of a woman who was mentally and physically numb.

"I will not leave town," she went on slowly, "Until I undo the damage I have innocently caused. No one but myself can bring Cary and Matt together. I will try."

Suddenly, her self-control snapped, and she was ablaze as she half shouted, "Now will you go?"

"No," chuckled Illetta. "Not until I say this, huh? Forget these fools. Listen to me, Tony Illetta. Von is my partner. I know what he knows—all he knows. So you do what I tell you to do. You try to bring them together, yes? But if not, you do what I say later."

Sari stared at him.

"Will you all go now," she said dully, "Or shall I leave myself?"

"We go," laughed Illetta, "Everything is fixed, huh?"

"It is not," roared the Reverend Elliott. "We demand that this woman leave Gonalad—"

"Shut up!" snapped Illetta. "We go."

HE shooed the bewildered flock out the door and shut it behind him. He stopped for a drink in the hotel bar and was not with the others as they shoved their way to the street.

"How about it, Domine?" came a voice from the waiting crowd.

"She refuses to leave," shouted the furious Elliott.

A low murmur came from the crowd. As the news carried to its uttermost limits, the voice of the mob deepened into a menacing buzz. Suddenly, a half drunk roughneck appeared on the decaying band stand. His voice was loud enough to cut through the din as he bellowed:

"She won't go, huh? Who says she won't go? I say she will go—"

"On a rail!" some one shouted.

With a sadistic whoop the crowd caught fire.

"Someone get the tar!" came a voice, and suddenly bedlam was let loose.

All the poison which had been gathering in Gonalad was suddenly released and this crowd was its outlet. A great wave of men washed against the walls of the hotel, rushed into the lobby, and flowed irresistibly up the stairs. The advance guard crashed into Sari's room and, in a trice, she was being flung from hand to hand down the stairs. The few women in the crowd were shrieking hysterically for vengeance; it was they more than the men who were responsible for her torn clothes and bleeding face as she was hustled through the crowd. Flesh and blood could stand no more. Long before she was lifted to the bandstand to await the arrival of tar and feathers, she fainted.

She did not know that Mrs. Bexar had melted the telephone wires to Matt's ranch and Cary's office; that Matt and his punchers were riding like mad for town, or that Cary and his roughnecks were already at the edge of the crowd.

Nor was that all. Mrs. Bexar herself was battling her way to the unconscious girl with the aid of her umbrella, and Kurt Von Hoffman was using his cane as a Heidelberg swordsman should.

Cary, with Katydid Knott immediately behind him and a dozen other roughnecks laying about them with a will, was making progress which became slower the nearer he got to the bandstand. Many an opponent who tried to resist went down to be trampled by the crowd. Cary, in the lead, would hit the man who resisted. By the time the man had swung on the receding Rogers, Katydid Knott would clip him from the side.

The oil men were swinging stakes with deadly effect, but nevertheless the maddened mob close to the bandstand fought back fiercely. Eyes like hot coals, lips set in a mingled snarl and smile, Cooper was a madman himself whose stake crashed home viciously on head after head, and sent its victims down like felled steers.

Just as the giant Cooper and his cowboys reached the fringe of the crowd, Cary and his men were storming the crowded bandstand. Sari was a pitiful, motionless heap in the center. Time after time the embattled roughnecks were shoved back by the men above them. Half of Cary's men were fighting off the crowd on the ground, the other half striving for a foothold on the bandstand.

Suddenly Cary loomed above the mob, held on the shoulders of two of his roughnecks. Twice his stake whistled home, and two rioters went down. Cary fell forward on the bandstand. They gave way before his deadly club, and roughneck after roughneck struggled to the platform.

As Mrs. Bexar pantingly clambered up and flew to Sari's side, Cooper was halfway to his goal. The giant was literally picking men off the ground and throwing them over the heads of the

crowd. His punchers were waving guns, cracking heads with the barrels if the mob demurred.

The bandstand was rocking and swaying under the thud of nearly a hundred feet as Cary and his men fought the leaders of the mob. Even in his fury, Cary still had sense enough left to refrain from shooting. One shot, and a holocaust would be under way. He dimly suspected that many a man had been trampled to death by the crowd.

So it was that he continued to fight with a splintered and bloody club. Then he wrested a baseball bat from the hands of a rioter. Men fell back before the deadly weapon, and as Cooper reached the center of the bandstand, the routed leaders of the mob jumped to the ground to rally their forces. At the same time, Kurt Von Hoffman reached the platform. His clothes were in tatters, his face bloody, but his eyes were unafraid.

A moment later the self-appointed bodyguards of the unconscious Sari were disposed in a thin line around the edges of the bandstand, fighting off wave after wave of frenzied men who sought to storm their stronghold. The pressure of the crowd behind forced even reluctant mobsters forward, and a growing barricade of unconscious bodies were trampled or kicked under the platform.

Down at the depot the frantic mayor was staring in dismay at the one sunburnt, bowlegged Texas Ranger who alighted from the train.

"Did they only send *one*!" he gasped.

"Hell, there's only one riot, ain't there?" returned the Ranger. "Let's go!"

He was just in time to see that strangely assorted trio—the three men in Sari's life—form their men into a compact flying wedge, in the center of which was Sari and Mrs. Bexar.

As the wedge started to battle its way through the crowd, Von Hoffman disappeared. Then someone spotted the Ranger.

"The Rangers are here!" he bawled. No one knew whether there was one or a hundred, but the name was enough. The crowd started scuttling away, disintegrating like rotten canvas in a high wind.

Twelve men had been killed, and a hundred seriously injured by the time Sari, Mrs. Bexar, Matt and Cary were speeding to the ranch house in Matt's car. The two men had not exchanged a word, save for quick, panted warnings in the heat of battle. There was tragedy in their set faces. Sari was like a death's head, from which peered eyes so filled with suffering that Mrs. Bexar herself was sobbing as she hugged the girl to her breast.

THE huge living room and every person in it was in a state of suspended animation as the two men and Mrs. Bexar listened to Sari's confession. Her voice was a flat monotone, as though she had been wrung dry of all feeling.

"I loved Kurt, would have done almost anything for him," she was saying dully. "My family were among the most prominent people in the country, but I would not believe the rumors they brought me.

"Then I found out that Kurt was supposedly a leader in a plot to restore the throne. At first, the money he had borrowed from me had gone into that. Then his insane love for gambling caused him to desert his own cause. Money he collected from me and others for the revolution he spent on gambling. He had used me in a dozen ways—to carry messages, to try to charm men into contributing large sums of money. You don't need to believe it but, though they would tell you in my country that I was one of the leaders of the whole plot, I did not know the significance of what I was doing.

"I was able to get out of the country. Revelation upon revelation had come all at once. I found out that Kurt was a

drug addict, like so many wartime pilots in my country. Gambling had become a disease with him. His whole moral fibre had disintegrated.

"He chased me halfway around the world—because he loved me, I guess. I was never legally in any country. To be deported meant torture to make me talk, then certain death. My family have disappeared because of what I was supposed to have done.

"When Kurt found out that I hated him, he came to hate me. He forced me to help him become acquainted with men whom he could swindle. He made me help him cheat at cards. He was waiting for a chance to use me to blackmail some one who loved me, and found his opportunity in—you two men. I hoped one of you would kill him, I admit it. I was helpless, in his power, afraid of him because he hated me. Only one thing he didn't do. He didn't try to force me to live with him, because he knew that I would rather be deported.

"That's—all, I guess. I was smuggled across the Mexican border. I am in this country illegally. A word to the authorities, and back to Europe I go."

"I reckon you've got quite a little life yet," Matt drawled very quietly. His eyes swept the strained circle. "I'm taking full responsibility for everything that's happened," he went on, his face set. "When I tied up this field I was acting like a child. I was a double-crossing louse, on account of being a jealous fool.

"Now listen, Sari, very carefully."

He got up, and started pacing up and down. He did not look at her, nor Cary.

"I haven't known every Texan in Washington for a lifetime without being certain that Mrs. Matt Cooper could never be deported out of this country. You're going to marry me today. You don't have to live with me, and you can divorce me as soon as we get you set as an American citizen, which we'll do if I have to pull every whiskuh out of a certain congressman's beard. Then you can marry Cary, but I can guarantee something if you're my wife—and maybe I couldn't get so far with the wife of somebody else."

"But I don't want to marry Cary!"

Sari said that very slowly and carefully. Her three listeners froze into statues. Then she looked full at Matt, and said:

"This is—a very peculiar time to say it, perhaps, but it may be that I will not have another chance. I won't pretend that I loved you when you asked me to marry you. But during the last few days I learned that I did. It means nothing now, of course. But I'd like to have you believe that since I have known you I have done nothing of which I am really ashamed. I never have.

"It's like you to offer to marry me now. But I can't, of course. I—"

"Don't be a fool!" exploded Mrs. Bexar. "Matt Cooper, you take her over to Judge Peters right now, and Cary and I'll stand up with you. Who can tell what that rat'll do downtown? There ain't any time to be lost. Git going!"

No one had noticed that Cary had slipped out of the room.

AN hour later, the towering ranchman was walking slowly down the hall which led to Kurt Von Hoffman's room. Fifteen minutes before, he had left a hysterical and unkissed bride with Mrs. Bexar. One minute before, he had left behind him a shriveled and frightened Tony Illetta. For once the smile had been wiped from the hoodlum's face, and one man had made Gonalad a town of which Illetta wanted no more.

Matt was ten feet from the closed door when it opened, and Cary Rogers emerged, gun swinging at his hip. Through the open door the body of Von Hoffman could be seen, lying on a couch which was stained with blood.

Matt stopped.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

"Came in the back way," Cary told him.

"Kill him?" inquired Matt casually.

"Didn't have to," Cary returned easily. "He'd shot himself. He'll die in a few minutes. I was just going for a doctor, but there's no sense to it."

"Sari said something about his making arrangements to get even with her if anything happened to him," Matt said.

"He'd burned the letter," Cary replied. "I believe him. He really shot himself, and was also kind enough to use a foreign pistol and leave a suicide note."

Matt walked into the room. The dying Von Hoffman opened his glazing eyes.

"I—congratulate you," he said with the hint of a smile. "I hope you like—my wedding present. She has nothing to fear—"

And the man who had lived like a blackguard died like a gentleman.

The two men walked slowly down the hall.

"Forgive me for being drunk?" Cary enquired.

Matt grinned, and patted the younger man on the shoulder awkwardly.

"I reckon you got a date to do the same thing again tonight," he drawled. "In case you don't know it, we're setting up drinks for the town. Then you're running the works, because Sari and I are taking a trip."

And such is the temper of an oil boom that the same crowd which had tried to punish a pariah with rousing enthusiasm that afternoon, drank with the same gusto to their queen that night.

Cary saw the Coopers off, long after midnight. Sari's happiness was almost sacred in its intensity, Matt's transformation almost as magical.

The tawny rover drove toward town with unaccustomed slowness. He felt curiously empty and at a loss, somehow—

The car topped a rolling rise, and his roaring kingdom lay spread out before him. The lights on hundreds of derricks twinkled like giant fireflies floating above the red mouths of boilers, and blackened gnomes who were toiling on dozens of derrick floors. The wild well was roaring again, the bass of the escaping gas undertoning the raucous, earthy bellow which rose from the blazing, rawly vital town. It was a splash of white against the dark green of the chaparal, as though the earth had opened up and a mad world somewhere in the depths had been revealed to the eyes of an effete civilization.

Cary's lean face was adorned with a sudden grin.

In one revealing flash his true self was revealed to him. Some men hanker for hearthstones and others for the heat of battle.

It was good to be alone.

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A Shawano came leaping from cover. . .

DAN'L MORGAN'S STRIPES

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

"SO THIS is sojering!" said Dan'l Morgan. "Sweat, mud and windy bellies!"

Raw-boned, weary beyond words, he sent his horses along. All day he had been putting shoulder to wheel, fairly pushing the heavy wagon and the four horses through the unending hills of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was in sprawling, glittering company: redcoats, ranger buckskin, sailors with cutlass aswing, and Virginia lighthorse blue, all moving at two miles a day, the gait of a first class tortoise.

Thank God, thought Morgan, a waggoner didn't march trussed in coats and belts, shoulders weighted by one hundred and twenty-five pounds of musket and knapsack. He viewed the army around and ahead of him with disdain —King George's troops, heading up to drive the French and Injuns out of that Fort Duquesne at the forks of the Ohio.

Dusk was falling, and Dan'l Morgan was in bad humor, when he at last rolled into camp. Muskets were stacked, tents were pitched, mess fires were flickering. He had to park his wagon and unhitch his staggering team before he could fall to and fend for himself, and the prospect was not pleasant.

"Well, what now?" he demanded, as an officer stopped his wagon. A stocky lieutenant in the royal scarlet, with the strut of a ruffling young gobbler.

"Sirrah, you're late into camp! You know the danger of straggling, and the orders bearing upon it. What's your name?"

"I'm Dan'l Morgan, with no time to talk, except to the wagon master. Straggling?" Morgan laughed. "You've a line four mile long; it's all in a straggle. Hell! Move on while I tend to my horses."

"What's this? An insolent provincial

talking impudence to a king's officer? Why, damme," exclaimed the officer, "it's time you American hirelings learned discipline! I've a mind to make an example of you!"

Morgan leaned over from the seat.

"No more hireling than you, and I've taken no king's shilling. I own this team and wagon; they're hired to the king's service, but I'm a free man. Now, mister, I've had a hard day. I ain't been trying to kill my horses to suit the like of you. Will you get out of my way?"

The officer cursed hotly. "General Sir Edward Braddock himself shall hear of this—another proof to him that you Americans are unfit for military duties! You're under arrest. Come down off that seat before you're hauled off."

"Quick enough," said Dan'l Morgan. He vaulted from the seat, landed lightly, and fronted the officer. Freckled face in a scowl, ragged shirt parted on his hairy chest, his anger-hot eyes drove into the officer. "I'm off. Want a fight, do you?"

The officer laughed. "Fight a provincial teamster? Take this, fellow—" and he lashed out with his sword. The flat of the blade stung through sweat-wet shirt.

A little crowd had gathered. Voices broke out in the dusk.

"Don't take it, Dan!" "You're as good as he is." "These redcoat rufflers need a puttin' down, they do."

Morgan stood for a moment, then laughed, and his arm swung.

"So, you cock-a-dandy! Your meat-toaster, my hide-tickler—" And his whip-lash smacked home about the scarlet shoulders.

The whip fell again. The officer stood erect, knuckle-white hand gripping sword; he had the courage of outraged pride.

"Two for one," said Dan'l Morgan. "Maybe that'll teach you manners."

"You've not struck me, my man," said the officer quietly. "You've struck the king's uniform. You've insulted His Majesty. Here, men!" His voice brought soldiers breaking through the crowd. "Arrest this fellow. Hold him for orders."

Morgan eyed the soldiers, eyed his team. He had worked hard to buy those good horses; to make a bolt for it would be to lose them. A very practical sort of man was Dan'l Morgan; not being able to fight the whole army, he went to jail.

Others were in the guardhouse tent, soldiers due for sentence or punishment. These redcoats were a roistering, thirsty lot. Questions were piled on him, and he gave angry, sullen reply.

"A damned officer struck me and I paid him in kind. I'm no sojer."

"Ho, lads, an American! What are ye, man? A teamster?"

"I'm Dan'l Morgan of Virginia, with my own team and wagon. I don't take a blow from anybody."

"Gawd! And ye struck a king's officer? Ye'll bloody well pay for layin' hand on that kind o' uniform!"

"Wasn't my hand. He used the flat of his sword. I used my whip."

Laughs, wondering exclamations, curious eyes.

"D'ye know what ye'll be getting for that?" said one. Morgan shook his head.

"I'm no enlisted sojer. I'm hauling on wages. If I'm to be struck by a whipper-snapper in a red coat, I'll take my team and go home."

"Tell that to the gen'ral. Ever hear o' Braddock discipline? You're under Gen'ral Braddock now. Struck an officer with a whip—Gawd! If a soldier is caught with a dram too much in him, he gets two hundred lashes; if he borrows to fill his belly, a thousand. How else, says the gen'ral, are we to march through this damned country of nowhere, with bloody savages layin' in the bushes? And you took whip to an officer?"

"Well," and Morgan scowled, "what'll they do to me?"

"A thousand wi' the cat. It's discipline makes the British army, me lad, as ye'll see if them frog-eaters and painted heathen try to stand ag'in us."

"I'll kill the man who lays lash to me," said Dan'l Morgan. "And your brags—hell! Colonel Washington with three hundred buckskins can l'arn you all how to fight."

He sat glowering, listening. Discipline! King's regulars, fourteen hundred of them, showing half as many raw provincials how to fight, and not with enough sense to pick off their woodticks every night. And, hours later, thinking of his team and wagon, he dropped off to sleep.

DAN'L MORGAN wakened again, a second time, with a flood of cold water dashed into his face. A hideous wakening, from a hideous dream. All after that morning rouse-up was like a dream now. He blinked up into the noon sun and remembered it.

Body stripped, wrists triced up to a tree, troops parading; and not a word out of Dan'l Morgan, not a whimper. But he counted. One hundred. Two hundred. Three and four—he lost count there and went to sleep again, until this second waking under the noon sun.

His eyes focused. The corporal who had watered him was striding off with the empty bucket. Over his wet shoulders was flung his own shirt. A man was squatted beside him, rubbing something into his back—a figure in buckskin and gray fox cap, a man he knew. Morgan moved, wrenched around, and sat up.

"Hello, Jack! You, huh? I counted to four hundred. What then?"

Swart Captain Patrick Jack flashed a dark smile. The Black Rifle, they called him, the Black Hunter, the Injun killer of the border country.

"You got quittance with a short count. Four-fifty."

"Five hundred, the sentence was," muttered Morgan. "I'm from Virginia, a free man. And nobody interfered. Not even Washington."

"He's behind, sick," said Captain Jack. "Rubbed in some b'ar's grease. Do you good. Better keep some on hand. Use it every day"

Morgan stared. "What are you doin' here? I heard tell Braddock kicked you out."

"My men and me, no pay, no discipline; sleep, eat, camp as we pleased." The dark man grinned and crooked finger at a second man nearby. "Braddock said he had enough undisciplined provincials now. Good day to you. Feller in a red jacket says, who made me a cap'n anyhow? My rifle, I says."

"And you're along of the army just the same?"

"Can't disapp'int this," and Captain Jack tapped his long rifle. "Cabin burned, wife and young 'uns put to the hatchet. Aye, I'm here. This march will draw Injuns like old meat draws flies. Here's Scarouady, with talk."

The second figure, a tall Indian with painted body and buckskin leggings, joined them, produced food and water, and grunted as Morgan grabbed it. Half King was his English name, a carrier of belts, of messages; he had served in the Ohio country with Washington.

"Braddock, a fool," he said. "No eyes, no ears. Injuns come to help him, leave him quick. He find plenty where he go."

"Injuns ahead?" Morgan asked quickly. He was trying to forget his burning back, doused down with smarting brine for quicker healing of the ribboned flesh.

"Mohawks with the white-coats," said Half King. "Delawares, Huron dogs, Shawanos, plenty more. Scarouady has ears. A bird tell him Injuns see redcoats march, can shoot men of this foolish redcoat captain like pigeon."

"They caught the Half King," Cap'n

Jack explained. "Tied him to a tree. He ain't there no more," and he chuckled. "Six hundred Injuns, three hundred French, ahead."

"A fair passel," said Morgan. "We got eight left—just eight Injuns left to scout with. Hell!"

"You ain't staying?" said the dark man. "You're good enough scout for me."

"Nope." Morgan's freckled features held an ugly glint, his voice gave ugly meaning to his words. "Damned turkey gobbler, he was! I said I'd kill the man who had me whipped. By God, I stay! King George owes me fifty lashes. I aim to wipe out the score."

"You're a fool. Fighting for Braddock's credit?"

"Nope. Dan'l Morgan's credit." With a wince, Morgan stood up and got into his shirt. He was tough. Four hundred and fifty—it was incredible. "I'm damned sore. Fifty lashes still due me, huh?"

Another figure who had been listening drew in upon them. It was the stocky lieutenant, the ruffled gobbler, who bent a caustic eye upon the glowering Morgan.

"Come, fellow. You had your choice. Two hundred lashes and a drumming out, or the full five hundred. You took the five hundred."

"Aye," said Dan'l Morgan. "You'll not be rid o' me so easy, that's why. I'm not to be cheated. I'll have my full due, mister. And you remember it."

The lieutenant frowned thoughtfully after him as he strode off.

The troops had marched, the wagons were forming. Amid the sympathy or rude wit of his companions, responding only with a hitch of his stiffened shoulders, Dan'l Morgan mounted into his wagon seat, glanced at his rifle under it, and fell to work at his horses. Fifty lashes due him, eh? Time enough.

SILENT, waiting, patient, Morgan spoke little those next days. Now and again he met the lieutenant, and his eyes glowered. If he spoke little, however, he heard much. News filtered along the line. Teamsters gossiped of what went on ahead.

Someone had talked with an officer's batman. Washington of Virginia had made the Britishers listen. His courtesy title of captain was offset by his knowledge of these very trails; he had been over them. What with cutting down trees and leveling hills and making roads, said he, Braddock would not get to Duquesne before the snow flew. And it was July now, or would be tomorrow.

So the grudging general had consented to travel light.

"Light!" and the teamsters grinned as they talked of it. Twelve hundred men, wheeled cannon, wagons of baggage, provisions, tools, ammunition. Two washwomen—"bare shanks"—to each company, files of pack animals. Light, huh? That was pretty good. Why, the march stretched out by the mile!

Dan'l Morgan plodded along with the wagons, getting occasional glimpses of the brave array out in front. Swinging in his seat as the wagon lurched, plying whip and lines with his expert wrestler's arms, hitching his sore shoulder to ease them, he looked at what went on around, and spat in contempt or sucked his pipe while his smoldering eyes sought the figure of that strutting gobbler.

Scotch and Irish sojers to fight Injuns, and Cap'n Jack kicked out! Something to grin about, that was.

Grenadiers stalking along, up ahead, never an enemy of any kind sighted, all the talk of Injuns nothing more than wild words. One thing sure, though. All the friendly Injuns who had advanced with the column had melted away. Eight of them left, by the talk. That looked bad.

At night, outposts of regulars, with

grenadier sentinels circled around. No scouts out, no Americans used; these provincials could not be trusted. Braddock was afraid they might melt and disappear, like the Injuns. How the teamsters chuckled over it!

"Tell you what, though," was the usual end-up. "Here's reg'lar sojers. Nothing can't stand afore them. French, Injuns, anybody—these bloody ramrods will just wipe 'em out. We may hate their guts, but they got guts, mind that!"

"Maybe," said Dan'l Morgan, and spat. "I ain't so sure. Me and Cap'n Jack and a dozen Injuns would raise hell with this outfit."

He was laughed to scorn, and rightly. French and Injuns were afraid, afraid of cannon, afraid of the iron discipline that would die and conquer. Plain folks could not hope to fight these troops, with all the imponderable weight of Britain behind them. Scattered Injuns couldn't stand before them. Serried ranks—this was something new on the frontier. Something new and deadly and terrible. Not to mention cannon.

"I ain't so sure," said Dan'l Morgan, glowering around. "Might l'arn different."

He was hooted down. Every man in America knew better. All the colonies knew better. His back should tell him better. Sure, some of these troops would die, but the rest would simply wipe out the French and Injuns.

So went the talk around the wagons, as it went around the taverns and the towns back in the colonies behind the frontier.

July crept in. The hot days crept by. There came a night, with the end of the march in sight. It was the eighth, somebody said. Morgan was not worried about counting days. He was young, and life was long. On the tenth, the word went around, they'd be in Duquesne. There was a good trail to follow, only it had to be widened to suit the engineers.

The evening was hot and sultry, with the Monongahela close ahead.

The camp was merry that evening. In the long lanes between the tents, tongues ran high. Scotch and Irish brogue filled the air. The regulars scoured their uniform buttons, pipeclayed their belts, greased their queues. Snatches of song drifted up. From the officers' tents rang more song and toasts over the wine, and laughter.

Among the parked wagons ran all kinds of talk. Dan'l Morgan sat hunched for a dose of bear's grease on his back. Itchy by this time, the back was, and healing.

"And what's the doin's to make the redcoats so gay?" asked the man who was rubbing him.

"Parade tomorrow, I heard tell," another said. "They aim to parade for the French and Injuns as they march up. Two more days and we're done."

"God save His Majesty! A sight for them varmints to see. Hey! Is it true that three drunk sojers fell behind today and got scalped?"

"Dunno. Heard some talk about it—hurray! Here comes the Black Rifle ag'in! And Gist's with him. Now we'll get some straight news."

THE RAIL-THIN killer came stalking up. With him was Gist, one of the guides from headquarters. A number of men gathered around. Dan'l Morgan stood up, and with a twist of his body got his shirt into place.

"Hi, Dan! Stripes healing up?" grunted Captain Jack. He leaned his rifle against the wagon and folded himself up, squatting on his heels.

"All but the fifty I didn't get," Morgan rejoined sourly.

"My gosh, if you ain't got reg'lar Injun notions! I'd hate to be in that

lobster's boots when you finally get your sights lined up on him."

"Never mind that. What's the news?"

"Oh, there's been a council pipe at headquarters. Heap talk. Gist, here, has been right nigh to the fort."

"Gen'ral sent me up to make sure of the trail," said Gist. "Beats hell how these sojers got to have a road! But that's how they'll win, I reckon. Yep, I got within half a mile of the fort. Not much sign o' life around, neither. Got chased and nigh caught by some Injuns, though. The Gen'ral sent out two of our Injuns today and they fetched in a scalp."

"Injun scalp?" queried Morgan.

Captain Jack grinned. "Nope. It's a good joke. They found a French officer out hunting and nabbed the poor devil." Then his dark face changed, hardened, snarled. "The Half King's in mourning tonight. You heard, Dan?"

"Nope. Don't hear nothing. In mourning, you say? What happened?"

"All hands got Injuns on their minds. A damned outpost party made a mistake and shot the Half King's son. Aw, this is a mess!" and the Black Killer spat disgustedly.

"It'll be all cleaned up in two days, now," said Gist. "There's to be an advance to open up the way; we got two fords ahead and a plain trail. The main body will come along in formation to make a showing. Boys, you'll see something tomorrow!"

Captain Jack grunted scornfully.

"Drums beatin' and fife's yelling to scare Injuns—huh! I'm scouting my own trail tomorrow, you bet. Say, where's Washington?"

Gist flicked a thumb over his shoulder.

"Oh, he's on hand; come up in a wagon, so's not to miss the fun." Gist emitted a chuckle. "All they'll call him is cap'n; the king didn't make him no colonel. Ain't that a good one? He wanted to clean out the woods ahead, but Braddock says he ain't taking no advice from a buckskin officer. Washington's shed his uniform for buckskin and it's made the gen'ral sore as hell."

"Feller was telling me tonight," spoke up a man, "that some of them high-falutin' officers is passing around mighty curious talk, about ghosts and such."

"It's true," and Gist nodded. "I heard 'em. Sir Peter Halket, he's clear in the dumps. Allows he had a dream with his eyes open. Seen himself and his son, that lieutenant, in shrouds pulled up over their chests. No, he wan't drunk. Them Scotch see things that way. They ain't right in the head at times, I guess."

"If he'd been Injun," grunted Captain Jack, "he'd ha' seen scalps dancing."

"What'd Washington make o' that ghost talk?" put in one of the thronging men. "I'll bet he didn't lay no store by it."

"I asked him about it," Gist replied. "The colonel sure gets off on the right foot every time, you bet! He says he trusted to smoky buckskins more'n shrouds. He allows them French are going to put up a fight o' some kind, even if they do get all washed up."

"He's righter'n anybody knows," said Captain Jack. "French may run, but these here Mingos and the rest, they aim to pack home a scalp or two."

A new voice intruded.

"Dan'l Morgan! Where's Waggoner Morgan?"

"What'll it be now?" said Morgan, as he stood up. Then his face changed, his eyes narrowed.

Two men were thrusting through the group. One was his stocky, ruffling lieutenant, who was in the quartermaster's department. With him was the wagon master.

"Morgan, you're to take your best team," said the wagon master, "and report to Major St. Clair in time to march with his working party at four in the morning?"

"And for what?" Dan'l Morgan shot out, his eyes on the lieutenant.

"To help clear the road of felled trees. Take a chain but no wagon."

"Pick on me if you like and be damned to you," said Morgan. "But there'll be more'n trees to clear out'n the way tomorrow, I bet."

The lieutenant looked him up and down.

"Still surly, are you? My man, your horses are rated in good condition. Perhaps you're afraid to join the advance?"

Morgan laughed, without mirth. "Me afraid? Not Dan'l Morgan. The king owes me fifty lashes I aim to wipe out, mister."

The officer sneered. "Oh, you'll be perfectly safe! Colonel Gage takes the van, to hold the road. In case of any attack, the rest of us will come up at the double to protect you."

"And there'll be redder backs than mine was," Morgan said.

The two went on. From somewhere up the lane of tents a grenadier was singing in mellow baritone:

"Busk ye, busk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride!
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow!
Busk ye, busk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride,
And think nae mair of the Braes of Yarrow."

One of the teamsters grunted.

"That lingo sounds like a drunken Shawnee talkin' French. Marrow, huh? No marrow in this camp o' short half rations, where all the critters are bags o' dry bones!"

"Hold on, hold on!" spoke up Gist. "There's a song I've heard Washington sing in camp—hark to it!"

Another voice had lifted from another group:

" .. .. .. me her promise true.
Gie'd me her promise true,
Which ne'er forgot will be;
And for bonnie Annie Laurie,
I'd lay me doun and dee."

"Good God! I'll hear no more o' that," and Captain Jack sprang up, strode off and was gone among the trees.

"Thinking of his wife again," said somebody. "Dan, you're a fool to go up to the front tomorrow. Ain't no place for us. We ain't hired to do fighting—"

"No redcoat's telling Dan'l Morgan he's a-feared. Besides, I aim to collect payment o' that fifty lashes that's coming to me."

He crawled under his wagon and stretched out. The others exchanged looks.

"What in hell does he mean by that talk?" muttered one.

"What you or me'd mean, I reckon, if we'd got whipped," another said. "Keeps his rifle loaded and fresh flinted, don't he? Wait and see. I could p'int to one redcoat officer who ain't going to get sculped when he gits a bullet in him."

Morgan slept, and dreamed no dreams.

NEARING dawn got him out of his blankets. His best team, his chains, his rifle on shoulder, and he plodded away, munching on a strip of dry beef. The east promised fine July sunlight, and birds were twittering. Here and there a parrakeet, in later times destined to vanish entirely from this country, flashed through the trees.

The party went forward. Two hundred and fifty "carpenters", as the British called axe-men and the like; tool carts hauled by hand, two brass six-pounders, soldiers and light horse to guard the flanks. And Dan'l Morgan with his team and a back that carried the royal sign o' the nine claws.

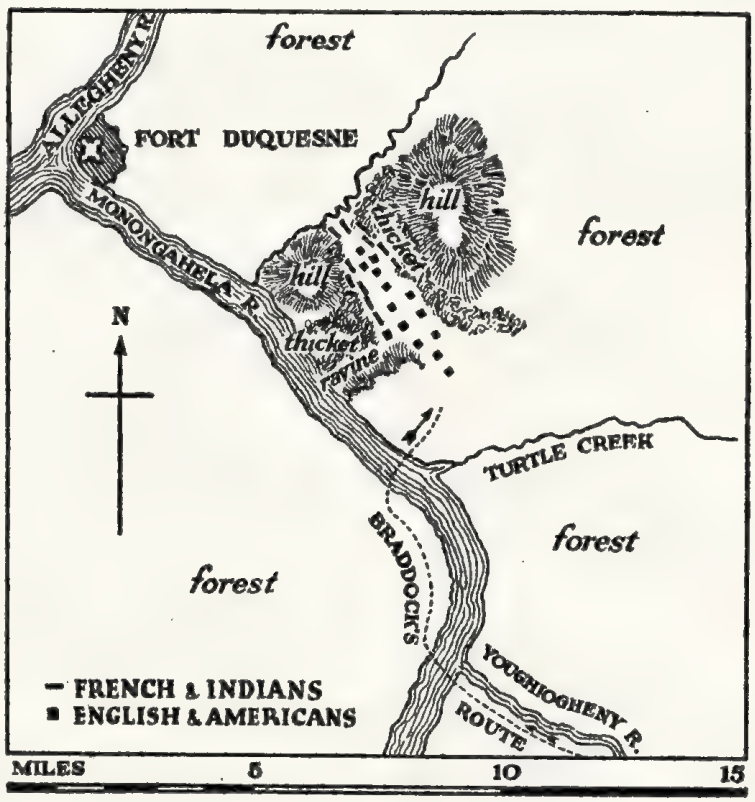
Across the river; banks low, water hip high, bottom hard. The trampled earth showed another party on ahead, to Morgan's eye. True enough; Colonel Gage with two grenadier companies and the New York provincials, and two more brass guns. And pioneers gone ahead to mark the road.

"Four hundred, with four cannon!" Morgan, mounted sideways on one of his horses, eyed the redcoats around him. "Hell! It's a slow march to glory that takes two days to cover six or eight mile. Lord save Dan'l Morgan from being a sojer in crossbelts and britches, marching by rule o' thumb—"

A corporal came shouldering up and spoke with a harsh burr.

"The orders are to get ye off that horse. 'Tis only the officers ride."

"I been promoted with drummer's stripes," and Morgan's eyes slitted. "But as it's time, I'll get off. Not for your orders either."



Trees ahead, axes at work widening the trail; on beyond, in the brightening daylight, the river glinted again. Another ford here. Across, on the rising bottoms, Gage's companies showed, at ease. A young officer came dashing back, his voice shrill,

"All clear, Major! I'm taking word to the general. We routed about thirty Indians out of the bushes here. They won't stand. The fort's ours!"

Dan'l Morgan mounted horse again, cuddled rifle under arm, and rode woman fashion across the ford. The sun was climbing into the blue. Back on the east side of the stream again; a ring of axes upon the high trees, the sounding of voices, of quick orders, of men at work as the road was widened. And from the rear lifted upon the morning stillness a clink, a clatter, a jolting rattle. General Braddock had formed his march.

Spade and shovel men were digging, leveling the river bank. Slow work there. Slow work ahead here in the woods; trees and brush hacked away, fallen timbers lugged off to clear an old pack trail for the grenadiers and the heavy cannon. Twelve feet wide, the engineers had ordered the road.

"You're the man with the team?"

Morgan looked aside, spat, wiped his freckled brow. Another corporal, who wore the red breeches of the New York provincials. All uniform and no rank, by gosh, except Cap'n Gates, who had once been a king's regular.

"Yep. I'm Dan'l Morgan of Virginia with a team, and what of it?"

"You're ordered to go on ahead. Cap'n Gordon's in a smother o' fallen trees, with a big 'un five foot through slap across the road. Your team's needed to haul."

"You'd do better putting your shoulders to it," said Morgan.

"Aye? Us king's sojers are for fighting, not for hand labor. Get busy."

"May the log rot afore I get there," said Morgan. "How fur be it?"

"Acrost the rise, a quarter mile."

Morgan gathered his chains, mounted one horse and led the other, unhurried. He passed among the axe-men and rode on, alone now. His eyes glowered at the trees around, silent and sun-hot. Dan Morgan knew his way around in border country, and he grimaced.

"Danged if I don't see a sculp hanging to every tree!" he told his horses. "Why should them Injuns have let us cross the river? Waiting to bag the lot, gen'ral and all. Wisht now I'd stuck to Cap'n Jack; no, I'm on my own trail, that's right. Fifty stripes short—and Dan'l Morgan takes 'em in the face this time, not on the back."

He came on to the rising ground, cocked his ear to sudden sounds, then drew his team to a halt. He brought out crumbled tobacco, stuffed it into his pipe, and presently had it alight, his eyes fastened on the back trail, down there among the walnut woods, between the two fords.

"If the gen'ral's in no hurry, Dan'l Morgan ain't neither," he said to himself, and grinned. A sight worth seeing, down there.

The nearer ford was clear in the view. The air, warming on toward noon, was faintly tremulous with shrill of fife and beat of drum, with the burr and plod of a column moving. Through the leafy aisles flashed the scarlet and gilt of uniforms, the glitter of bayonets. The column was filing in solid ranks, white cross-belts cutting the vivid scarlet.

The 44th Foot, officers a-horse, swords out and glinting, ranks of bayonets at shoulder. Then the blue trappings of the Virginia Light Horse, the red coats and breeches of the provincials. The workmen had not finished with the ford. The column wheeled, broke, drilled as on parade. Grenadiers, with immense tall hats, cannon and detachments of seamen, the main baggage column still far in rear. Regimental colors hung listless but in brave hues.

"God save the king, the sight's worth a few stripes on the back!" muttered Dan'l Morgan. "Well, I've spent time enough at it."

He watched the troops parading through the ford, and turned to his horses. Ahead, axes were clanging, trees crashing. Morgan moved on.

Lower ground, now, the head of a dank ravine. Morgan stopped to loop the chains over the backs of his horses. By thunder, the brush was thick! And on ahead it looked worse. And there showed the great log he was ordered to haul aside. A monster log, right in the trail, bridging the clearing at the shallow of another tangled ravine.

MORGAN went to work. It took time. The horses strained and crashed in the brush. When at length he had it done, when he wiped his sweating face and unhooked, the Gage advance party was coming. He grunted and swung up to a broad hot back.

"No working party for me, Mister St. Clair," he muttered. "My time's my own, and if the redskins are running away, I want a crack at 'em. We'll see what Cap'n Gordon looks like, up ahead."

He rode on, up a gentle slope, with the axes at work behind. Ahead showed a glint of crimson, the blue of the Light Horse. Axes at work here, too, boughs crackling, voices echoing. Morgan came up with the men at work, and they stared at this country bumpkin, riding woman fashion, rifle across lap.

"What do you want?" snapped a sergeant.

"No business of yours," and Morgan grinned. "I'm a-horse and outranking you. Where's the cap'n?"

"You'll find him ahead, and gae to the deil with ye!"

"True word," said Morgan. "The devil and his pack are likely waiting to lift your hair, my rooster."

He rode on. Horsemen, now. Gist was here, in buckskin, axes at work. A mounted officer swung around at sight of him.

"What do you want?"

"I'm Dan'l Morgan with the team—"

"Moccasins!" the cry burst from Gist. "Look out, Cap'n!"

Morgan gripped his rifle, straightened up. The party of Light Horse peered. A rushing sound, like wind through the forest leaves—and there, close in the upward trail, a slim figure in gay fringed shirt and leggins, rifle in hand and silver gorget dancing on his breast—a Frenchman!

Keen brown features alert, he leaped like a deer, and behind him a running file of redskins like painted hounds.

"By God, there they are!" Gist's voice again. "Back, back to Gage, Cap'n! We're between two fires here—"

The Frenchman stopped short, waved his hat, as Morgan gawked at him. The host of dark figures behind him dived to right and left, and in another instant had vanished utterly. Closing the trail, coming on in a semi-circle, was a front of white coats and woodsman buckskin. French!

The Light Horse scampered. Gist was dodging through the woods. The captain was at the gallop downtrail, the axe-men were bolting like rabbits. Morgan slid off as his horse plunged, saw the French muskets leveled, and ducked flat.

"Vive le roi! Vive la France!" came the cheer. The muskets banged and balls swept the shuddering trees. A war-whoop lifted from the silent green depths, as Morgan took to his heels.

He was barely alert enough to duck flat once more, when the British line deployed and the white smoke gushed. Then up and among his own folks, safe enough. Not an Injun to be seen now, but balls whistled. The French muskets volleyed, the white coats surged forward and among the trees.

Now came the two six-pounders, trundled full tilt, wheeling around, the gunners ready. "Boom! Boom!" The grape hissed. The young Frenchman with the silver gorget went rolling. The trees shed twigs and leaves. A swarm of Indians leaped up and scuttled away. The grenadiers cheered, and volleyed the more. But now the French had taken to cover.

Morgan stared around, gaping, seeing things in flashes of amazement. Men were falling, screaming, writhing; the flanking squads were driven in, the whole advance was massed in the road and crowded on the working party behind. Morgan, covered behind a tree, caught a glimpse of Gist close by; the guide was hailing him.

"Dan! This is hotter'n hell. Those regulars are shooting at nothing."

"Dummed skittery," Morgan replied, then uttered a sharp yelp. "Hi, Jack! How about it?"

Captain Jack appeared, gliding out of nowhere, and taking to cover again close by.

"Half King's somewhere; counted on two of the varmints. There's hundreds all about. Hello, Gist. Where's Braddock?"

"Back with the column. Lay low, now—"

No need of that advice. Lead came from everywhere. Muskets were banging away under the low-hanging drift of smoke. Morgan ducked low and hugged the ground. The Injuns, as he could tell by the whoops, were working along to close the rear. Captain Jack, coolly appraising, was sizing things up and biding his time. Morgan was well content to await some word from him.

Regulars, provincials and workers, all in a jostling huddle, were pouring backward along the road. They left behind

them the hot cannon, and a trail of red. Not a horse remained alive.

"All right!" burst out Cap'n Jack abruptly. "Come on!"

He broke cover and leaped away from that deathly road. Gist and Morgan, keeping together, followed the Black Rifle. Morgan sighted painted, leaping forms; he caught mere flashes of action, scanty pictures etched on his brain. Cap'n Jack's sudden pause, butt to shoulder, muzzle spurting; Gage, bawling away unheard, red-faced, flailing with the flat of his sword to turn his men; and the boiling, dying rabble in the road, with the Injun muskets keeping pace unseen.

"Washington!" burst forth Gist.

Here were soldiers flooding up from the first bottom rise. Regulars, yes; but the rangers too, and Washington, by glory! Washington, sending out the rangers to fight fire with fire. Morgan leaped forward, only to stop short. No go! The crazy mob from up the road crashed into the arriving ranks; there was just another jumble of men dying and screaming and firing blind.

The picture came suddenly clear to Morgan. Good God, what a thing it was to see!

Through the smoke loomed Sir Peter Halket, and Braddock himself. Here were the regulars, lined up on parade formation, closing ranks as men died, blazing away with volley on volley—slap into the trees as though the Injuns were squirrels! They choked the road for full thirty rods. French and redskin muskets simply poured lead into the ranks, and no bullet could miss such a target. Morgan saw Braddock's horse pitch forward, saw the resplendent figure clamber up into another saddle, saw the parade-ground ranks close up as men died.

His own voice shrilled in his ears. He found himself yelling, cursing the damned fools, shouting at them to break ranks and fight like the provincials. Quick shame gripped him and he looked around, but his voice had gone unheard. Then he was aware of eddying movements, of breaking ranks. No discipline could stand this scorcher. The grenadiers were imitating the provincial troops and the rangers, were breaking for the cover of the trees.

Morgan whipped around at a sudden crashing sound and saw a huge Scot, scarlet and buff of the 48th, standing helplessly a dozen feet away.

"Oot wi' the bagonet!" Morgan caught the gasped words. "The deil's in the bracken and ne'er a sicht o' him—"

A whoop, a shot, and the Scot sank down. Another whoop, and a Shawano came leaping from cover, knife bared, not seeing the sheltered Morgan. But Morgan stood up and the long rifle gushed and roared; he crouched again to reload, watching the red man kick and die.

"Out of here! Back to your colors!" Officers came ramping, raging. "Shame to you! Into the ranks!"

MORGAN, reloaded, moved on. He caught sight of Gist, rifle asmoke, and started for him. A grenadier was taking cover; then came a burly figure, a roar of oaths—Braddock himself, in a towering rage, sword flatting at the poor devil in uniform.

"My God, that I live to see a British soldier skulking like a rabbit in its form! To the colors—"

Morgan slipped up to Gist. "The man's daft. They're all daft. Where's Washington?"

"Everywhere. You saw him? The damned sniff-necked Braddock won't listen to him. No coward. Had three horses shot under him, someone said."

"I ain't being sculped to suit a redcoat," said Morgan. "There's a ranger—"

"All the rangers!" exclaimed Gist. "Waggener's company. Himself. Come on!"

Presently they were with the Virginians, crouching in cover. Morgan nodded to Cap'n Tom Waggener, crawled up beside him.

"Hey! There's a monster big log I hauled out with my team, laid it along the head of that ravine down beyond. Cover for a regiment, and clear shooting down the ravine if you want to clear out them varmints—"

"By God, that's a notion!" cried Waggener. "Stephen! Cocke—damn it, what's this fool doing?"

A redcoat officer striding bolt upright toward them, lifting hoarse voice.

"General Braddock orders that you provincials cease hiding and form up with the colors in the line—"

Morgan recognized the stocky lieutenant; his back twitched, his eyes slitted with hatred.

"Down, you fool!" Waggener dragged at the lieutenant. "Lay low like the rest of us or you won't see Braddock again to tell him to go to hell."

"I tell the general that? You dare send—"

"Let him fight his own scrap and be damned. We'll fight ours." Waggener's voice bugled. "Davis! Simms—Hello, Cap'n Jack! Thank God! Get word to the other companies. Rally and follow us. Draw the Injuns' fire and then leg it. Morgan! You be ready to show the way to that log."

"You're not attacking them?" gasped the lieutenant.

"Of course. Fight Injun fashion."

"Shed your red coat and come along," and Morgan looked into the officer's face. "Huh? Scairt Braddock won't let you?"

"I'll shed no uniform," snapped the other. "Go with you? Yes, of course. It's a shambles out there. If I can do anything—I have my sword—"

Morgan laughed scornfully. Then Waggener's voice caught him.

"All set, Dan! All together. Duck the balls. On the dodge!"

Lead screamed low and incessant from the green depths on their left; lead screamed and hurtled high from the road, in crashing volleys. Between two fires Morgan slithered and dodged from tree to tree, making for that log of his. It was the only definite, coherent thing his brain could fasten upon.

Suddenly he found the stocky lieutenant, useless sword in hand, pounding and panting beside him as he crouched. He snarled up at the sweating officer.

"Bend your back like the rest of us, you bloody—!"

"I will not—"

Morgan grappled him, brought him down, furiously.

On again. They reached the log. Morgan had swung it into line with other logs and brush. There was a natural breastwork, with the ravine obliquely open beyond, a-swarm with French and painted coppery shapes. Waggener came up, others joined in, eighty or more straggling along the cover. To the rear, the road vomited smoke as the grenadiers volleyed blindly.

The long rifles poked across log and brush. Morgan fixed on a tawny mark. Smoke jetted along the entire line, lead went smashing home. Shouts of delight rippled from the log.

"Hooray! We got 'em proper!"

"Look at 'em—"

Morgan was up, the better to see. The hap-hazard breastwork was rimmed with buckskin, arms plying powder-horn and ramrod while the smoke drifted.

And in this instant, a bellow upon bellow of musket volleys from behind. The grenadiers had something to shoot at now. A tempest of balls drove in with smack and thud. Another volley. Morgan, clutched with horror, felt his mind slipping. Buckskin stretched along the log forever, moved down by British lead.

After this, for a while, Morgan had no memory whatever. He simply went

stark mad like everyone else.

Fighting? There was no more fighting; it was panic. Futile panic, for death lay spitting from every tree and covert along the hewn road. The soldiers were hulking on the run. Morgan had glimpses of them, poor huddled sheep being driven along. His own safety was a matter of blind instinct, spurred by the sight of scalping knives at work.

Suddenly he found a breathing spell, away from that road of wailing, screaming agony. His brain clicked. He was himself—panting, his lungs afire, his face afire, spitting blood and bits of teeth. A ball in at his cheek and out his mouth. And, as by some miracle, the man he hated so virulently beside him.

Morgan stared. Aye, none other! Sword gone now, uniform ragged and blood-smeared and ripped away, a ball through the shoulder and another along the ribs, but still the strutting gobbler with head held high.

"British regulars firing into their own allies—good God!" the lieutenant was gasping. Morgan spat out a last tooth fragment and a curse.

"They had to hit something," he mumbled. "Pity they choose their betters for a mark. Get your breath."

"God's name! You helped me out of it. Get on, get on, and leave me!"

"Not me," said Dan'l Morgan. "You've got one good arm left, and if there's no drummer for the cat you can have the job. Remember I'm short fifty lashes."

"Damme, I'll not have your help!" cried the other wildly. "You're a brave fellow. Get on with you."

They were snarling at each other, cursing, talking madly, when worse came upon them. An officer with blood streaming from him, and his eyes the eyes of stark insanity, frenzied words on his lips. His mind had gone. He came stumbling at them and saw them not. "Braddock shot through!" shrilled his voice. "Halket dead, and Jamie his son. The best troops of Britain on the run. Let me pass, let me pass! I must tell His Majesty what a jest it is—"

His shrill mad laughter died as he stumbled on and was lost to sight. Morgan caught the lieutenant by the unhurt arm.

"There's the ford. Buck up, now! We'll make it."

"Zounds! I apologize to you, sir," said the officer. "I'll let my apology be known, for damme if you're not a brave fellow!"

"Don't forget that fifty lashes," grunted Morgan.

"Let the score stand, sir," said the other, grimacing with pain. "It's all in your favor."

Morgan looked at the man curiously, met the unflinching eyes; the two of them crouched in shelter, staring at each other. Morgan's hand met that of the lieutenant, gripped it hard.

"Let's go," said Morgan.

They lifted, stumbled forward to make the next shelter. The first ford was just ahead of them. A remnant of rangers had spread out, from tree to tree, and were fighting off the pursuit, but the torrent of flight and slaughter never slackened. The lieutenant staggered, caught at a tree for support, and Morgan slipped an arm around him.

"Hold on. All safe now. Get your breath, then we'll make it."

The Briton's face was ghastly.

"We should have listened to you provincials," he muttered. "We've learned."

Learned? Dan'l Morgan wiped blood from his chin and grunted.

"Aye. We've l'arned too. Your chin-up, bagonet-bragging sojers can be made to run. Something to remember, that is. Take it easy. We'll let the whole score stand, for another reckoning. Let's go."

And stand it did, until twenty-five years and six months later, at the Cowpens in South Carolina. And then General Daniel Morgan, of Morgan's riflemen, wrote off his score in five grimly exultant words:

"One Threshing. Paid in Full."

"He rode his paint pony slap over him."

THE COMANCHE KID

by E. B. MANN

Fourth of Five Parts

"HE WASN'T big—but he was dynamite!"

That was Comanche's verdict on Dallas Spain, who rode alone into the Shogun country, trailing the masked desperado who wore his father's guns.

Spain was a name with trigger-tense qualities in the Southwest. Angel Spain, the father of Dallas, had killed his share of men, both before and after he became a peace officer. At the present time his name was clouded by a tragedy which had shocked three states.

Two bodies had been found in an arroyo five miles from Angel's ranch. They were burned beyond recognition, but had been identified as the remains of two men who had been closing a deal with Angel for his land holdings. And now Angel Spain was missing with the money they were known to have been carrying—and a hooded bandit, who carried Angel's guns, was riding the owl-hoot trail.

Shortly after Dallas Spain had arrived in Comanche, the hooded man shot Manning Doran, a rancher. And this time definite, although contradictory clues began to take shape.

Dallas Spain accused Zimmerman, a rancher, of being in reality Jorgensen, who was supposed to have been murdered by Spain's father. The inference was plain. If Zimmerman *were* Jorgensen, then Angel Spain's charred body had been one of the two discovered at the ranch, and another, masquerading as the dead man, was the hooded night rider.

Zimmerman, however, seemed to have an air-tight alibi, and shortly something happened which seemed to put him definitely in the clear. For in a Comanche saloon, with Zimmerman in plain sight of a score of witnesses, a shot from the dark wounded Mac, the proprietor (and the narrator of the story). The gunman escaped, but not before he was seen through the window—and identified as wearing a black hood!

Meanwhile the ill-concealed enmity between Zimmerman and Dallas Spain was breaking out into deadly feud, aggravated by the skill each of them had shown at gun-fighting and with bare fists.

Sooner or later that feud was to be settled. It would be with lead or fists, but it would be settled for all time.

And on a day scarcely a month after Spain first arrived, a quick succession of events piled drama upon near tragedy, and made the showdown all the more inevitable. Angel fell in love with Paula Doran, who had been hand-picked for Zimmerman's future wife. She announced her engagement to Zimmerman—and intimated that she was doing it because of some hidden debt. Zimmerman and Spain were matched for a grudge fight—with half the money in town bet on the outcome. And last but not least—the hooded man remained unknown and uncaptured, with two men's names under a cloud while he still lived!

CHAPTER XV

NIGHT SUMMONS

FRECK gulped. "Gee, that's too bad. But you'll lick hell out o' him tomorrow night, won't you, Mr. Spain?"

"I'll try," Spain said. "And by the way, my name is Dal. You remember that, Freck. Now, tell me."

"Well, I was in the barn, like I told you. I'd forgot to feed my pony. It was dark and I was gettin' the corn for him when these two guys came up. Dad came out o' the office just then and spoke to 'em. He said, 'Hi, boys. Leavin' early, ain't you?' And one o' these guys says, 'Yeah,' and dad says, 'Be back for the fight tomorrow night, I reckon? How you bettin'?' And one o' these guys laughs and says, 'We're bettin' on Zimmerman.' So dad says, 'Well, it takes a difference of opinion t' make a horse race,' and they paid him and dad went back in the office."

Freck took a breath. "Soon as he'd gone, one o' these guys laughs sort o' low and says, 'You can't have no horse race when one o' the horses is dead, mister!' And the other'n says, 'Ain't that the truth! There'll be some letdown hombres in this town when Spain don't show up, eh? How you reckon they'll settle the bets?' And the other guy says, 'The guy that's there wins by de—'"

"Default?" Spain said sharply.

"That's it. And then the other guy says, 'Well, that'll be Zimmerman, then. Too bad we ain't got more money t' bet.' And that—that's all."

"What did they do?" Spain asked.

"They rode away. I watched 'em, but they wasn't headed toward Doc's place, and I knew you was there, so I let 'em go."

"They rode out of town?" Spain asked.

"Yeah. But they could come back, couldn't they? Or maybe they're figgerin' on dry-gulchin' you somewhere—"

"Maybe," Spain said. "What did these jaspers look like, Freck?"

Freck scowled. "One was a little bow-legged guy with a mustache like dad's. You know—one that's long and hangs down at the sides of his mouth. And the other'n was fat, and he had a couple o' day's beard on his face."

Spain nodded. "You see? They can't dry-gulch me if I don't leave town, and if they come back, why, thanks to you, I'll be lookin' for a fat guy with stubble on his face and a little guy with a mustache, and I'll be on my guard. Don't you worry, Freck. You beat it to bed now, and tomorrow night you hunt up Mac, here, and he'll fetch you right down to my corner. I want you for one of my seconds. How about it?"

"Gee, Dal! That's swell!"

The kid trotted off toward the livery barn. Spain watched him go, then turned to me.

"Well, Mac?" he said.

"Whatever else Zimmerman is," I said flatly, "He ain't yellow. He ain't hirin' men to keep you out of that ring tomorrow night; he's lookin' forward to it!"

"Maybe," Spain said. "Or maybe he figures it'd look even better if I was to run out on him. He suggested that—remember? That's how it *would* look, if I was to disappear. And then, there's Jorgensen—"

"Jorgensen?" I said. "I didn't get it."

"Yeah. The Hood. If Zimmerman *is* Jorgensen—if Zimmerman's The Hood—"

I scoffed at that. Spain shrugged. "I know; you don't believe it. At least you say you don't. All right, we'll leave that out. But—there's bigger things stirrin' than any prize fight, Mac."

He smiled and looked away again.

"Not that I need to tell you," he said.

His smile was gone before he spoke again. "Zimmerman don't love me; that's a cinch. Maybe he'd rather get rid of me permanent, and make certain people think I was yellow, than to have the fun of whipping me. The Hood don't love me, either. His scheme was workin' sweet till I showed up. Not that I've done much to hinder him—just stirred things up a little. But maybe I'm crowdin' him closer than I know. It's a cinch he wouldn't mourn any if I was to die. I knew that when I first rode into Comanche. He did try, finally, and failed, thanks to you."

LISTENING to him, I got a flash back in my memory to that day when I'd seen him ride down Fremont Street that first time. I remembered how erect and cool he'd looked. And yet he was riding into a town that held his father's murderer—a man he'd never seen, but who might easily recognize him because of his likeness to Angel Spain; a man who'd shoot him just as cold-bloodedly as I would shoot a rattlesnake and for the same reason: because, alive, Spain was a threat to him. It takes cold nerve to ride calmly, quietly, against a danger you can't see.

Of course there'd been the chance, then, that the man Spain sought was not his enemy. Deep down in the dark recesses of Spain's mind had been the lurking fear that the thief, the killer, known as The Hood was Angel Spain.

That fear was gone now. Whatever

else Spain had done, or had failed to do, he had convinced himself that Angel Spain was honorably dead and that the man who rode behind the hood was not Angel Spain. I could sense that certainty in Spain's voice now and I knew why. The scar on my own head was an aching reminder. The man who had fired that shot had fired it at Spain, not at me. Angel Spain would never have fired that shot.

He shrugged, and smiled again. "Sorry, Mac. I didn't mean to unload my troubles onto your shoulders. Don't worry. I'll be all right. I'm turnin' in."

He turned and reached for the handle of the door leading into the lobby of the Brill House. But he paused there and stood motionless for a moment before he faced me again.

He said, "I don't quite know how to say it, Mac; but—look. I've got a ranch. It ain't such a bad layout. What I'm drivin' at is this, Mac. I've heard you say you'd like to own a horse ranch. I've had the same idea. Always figured that, when I got around to it, I'd sell off what cattle is left down there and start myself out in the horse business. You wouldn't consider goin' into partnership with me, would you? Takin' charge of the place for me? It's sort of urgent—that somebody puts a hand to the wheel right away. And I can't get away."

He was talking swiftly now, watching me with a pair of eyes I couldn't see behind.

"If you could leave tomorrow you could be down there by the middle of the week—sooner, maybe, if you went by train. That'd give you tomorrow to wind up any affairs you had to tend to here, and you could get a train out of Lyman Junction—"

He saw my smile, and stopped.

"And miss the fight?" I said.

He made a quick impatient gesture.

"And what would I do with the Paystreak?" I said.

"Hell! Turn it over to Lefty. Sell it. To hell with it! You'd be better off, Mac, and happier, in a saddle than you'll ever be in a place like the Paystreak. I'll sell you a half interest in the ranch, and the two of us—"

I said, "Thanks, son. But I can't do that."

Spain nodded.

"I was afraid of that," he said slowly. "Well—" He shook my hand. "Whatever happens, I'm grateful for what you tried to do last night. For that, and—other things. Remember that, won't you?"

I shook with him, but I guess my voice was pretty gruff when I finally managed to speak. I said, "Look here! It sounds to me like you were trying to —to tell me good-by, or something! Hell, if you feel *that* way, I'll come up and stand guard over you—"

Spain shook his head. "No, Mac. No need for that. So long. I'll be all right."

He turned again and I watched him walk through the hotel lobby and up the stairs toward his room. I stood there, half minded to follow him in spite of what he'd said. But I called myself a fool, finally, and walked on down the street to the Paystreak. Somehow when I got there the noise and the bustle of the Paystreak wore on me. Somebody yelled at me to join a poker game, but I shook my head. A couple of cattlemen cornered me, trying to get me to bolster up their hope that Spain would lick Zimmerman, but I shook them off. I'd never seen Spain's ranch, of course, but that night I was picturing it in my mind. Picturing it as a pleasant place of rolling hills carpeted with shortgrass, of sweet water, of shaded valleys where a man could ride alone in clean thin air and see his horses grazing on the sunlit slopes—

I've often wondered if, when Spain shook hands with me, he guessed what he would find awaiting him in that dark room of his; if he knew then how long

it would be before I would see him again. I reckon not. And yet he must have known that the forces stirred up by his arrival in Comanche were closing in on him; that success or failure loomed very near, and that his life was the one flimsy barrier between the two.

THE upstairs hallway in the Brill House was dark when Spain came into it and he halted on the topmost step to let his eyes grow accustomed to it.

Freck Johnson had said that the fat man and the little one with the handlebar mustache had ridden out of town. Mac had scoffed, more or less gently, at the idea of any danger. But Spain thought not. For he had recognized this fat man and the bandy-legged man from Freck's description, and he knew that there were two more who would be aligned in this affair with them. These two were unaccounted for.

And so Spain stood there for a little while in the faint light that drifted up from the lobby, his mind alert, his senses taking in each sound and movement in the ancient house. Somewhere to his left, a man's voice made a low continuous rumble. The night-clerk eased his cramped muscles in his chair in the lobby. A dozen rapid steps made a crisp, sharp chain of echoes as someone walked across a room. There was a rattle, as of a door being tried and found locked, and then another dozen steps, returning, and the creak of a bed. A floorboard snapped protestingly somewhere in the hall itself and Spain's nerves twitched and then relaxed again.

Six paces across the hall brought him to the door of his own room and he stopped again in front of it and laid his ear against the door's paneling, searching the semi-silence for some hint of movement there. He shrugged, finally, and fitted his key in the lock and stepped aside so that the faint glow from the stairway might not outline him in the doorway. He turned the key then and let the door swing inward. It went back smoothly, all the way, stopping at last with a sharp thud against the wall. A moment passed. Spain's ears still probed the space beyond that door, but his eyes were fastened now upon a patch of white on the floor just inside the sill. It was an envelope.

He shrugged at last, stepped inside the room and closed the door. That envelope on the floor at his feet had cured him of most of his suspicions of that room, for men who had come to wait for his return would hardly have left that message there for him; yet he stood again for a moment in the thick darkness and let his senses test that darkness thoroughly before he crossed the room and drew the curtain over the single window. He struck a match then, and lighted the lamp.

The room was empty and undisturbed. Without moving from his position beside the table, his eyes sought out his few belongings and found them exactly as he had left them. The envelope lying a foot inside the door was the only evidence of an alien presence during his absence. He walked back now and picked it up. It was unsealed and there was no address, no stamp, no mark of any kind on it. He slid his fingers inside and pulled out a single sheet of note paper, folded. As he opened it his eyes fell on the signature and his breath caught sharply.

He walked back to the lamp and sat down. The note was brief, written in a hurried scrawl:

Dear Mr. Spain:

What you will hear tonight will surprise you, maybe, but I don't want you to think bad of me because of it. So I'd like to talk to you.

Don't come to the hospital because I don't want my father to know I'm seeing you. But if you would meet me at the old schoolhouse a mile west of town on

the road toward the Yellow Star mine, say at midnight, we could talk.

Please come.

Paula.

Spain read it twice. There was a little smile on his lips as he folded the note and slid it back into its covering. He glanced at his watch and found it still lacked an hour till midnight, but he stood up.

"No use keepin' them waiting," he said softly.

He picked up his hat and reached for the lamp. On second thought, he pulled the gun out of the holster on his hip, opened it, and spilled the cartridges out of the cylinder into the palm of his hand. They looked all right, but he laid them aside and filled the gun again out of the supply in the loops of his belt. That gun had been out of his possession for a while tonight, and he was taking no unnecessary chances.

THE night clerk was dozing when Spain crossed the lobby this time and he did not look up. Spain crossed Fremont Street and walked north to Johnson's livery barn. He found his horse and saddled him. A rustle of movement tensed his muscles once more during this business and he stood quiet for a little while, facing the street door. But the sound died out and did not come again.

He saw no one he knew as he rode out of town. Once he thought he heard the rapid thud of hoofs behind him and he drew aside, waiting for the rider to pass. But no one came and he shrugged and let the white gelding carry him out into the trail again.

It was nearing midnight when he made out the darker shadow of the schoolhouse on the hill ahead of him and he swung aside again, into the black shadow of thick growth along the dry bed of a little creek curving around the foot of that hill. So that, when he came finally to the crest of the higher ground, he faced the schoolhouse from a back corner and not from the front as he would have done had he followed the Yellow Star wagon road. He checked the gelding in the shadow of a shed that had once sheltered the ponies of the boys and girls who rode to school, and leaned forward in the saddle.

Comanche had a new school now, big enough to accommodate the town's sudden growth. This building had been out of use for some time and a thicket of wild roses as high as a man's head grew beside the steps leading up to the front door. That door was not visible from where Spain was, but he knew that it was off its hinges and that the interior of the building was a litter of broken desks and old lumber, with glass in jagged shards on the floor, smashed out of the windows by rocks hurled, probably by small revengeful boys.

Minutes passed, and Spain's ear caught a far-off jingle of steel as if some horse had tossed his head and set his bit-rings a-jangle. The gelding heard it, too, and cocked his head toward the rear of the building. Later, a bit of glass crunched under an unwary boot and a man's voice growled a guarded oath. Spain smiled.

He stepped out of the saddle and walked out into the moonlight, across the schoolyard, into the shadow again beside the building. Where that shadow ended at the front of the building he stopped again. Something stirred restlessly inside the house and Spain nodded, satisfied. He took a long, full breath and walked out into the moonlight again, his right hand swinging in short, easy arcs, his quick stride carrying him past the steps.

He stopped and turned.

"I'm here," he said . . . and waited.

Already he had seen the blacker hulk of a man's body in the dark doorway, and the curving outline of a hat among the bushes to his left. Two men, Freck

had said. Well, here they were. But they were watching for him to come to them from the opposite side, or had been—

The man in the doorway above Spain said, "Hell!" with growling emphasis, and drew. Spain heard the slap of his fingers on the leather of his holster and sent his own hand to its task. At his left, Spain saw the man there spring clear of the bushes and whirl and crouch a little, his hands making a blur of movement on either side of him.

Spain's shot came first, stabbing up into the darkness of the doorway. He leaped sidewise then, turning a little, and chopped a shot out to the left. But he had a moving target there and he knew that he had missed. He felt the wind of the answering shot, and fired again.

Then someone yelled yonder on the wagon road and a horse came thundering across the yard, and a gun spoke twice in swift staccato time. Spain dropped.

This was a thing that he had not foreseen, this third antagonist.

"No use keepin' them waiting," he said softly.

CHAPTER XVI

MAN HUNT

IF I had thought that Friday was a hectic day in Comanche, Saturday showed me what real excitement was. I was up at nine, awakened by the shouting and the shooting and the hoof-clattering of cowboys pouring in off the ranges. The streets were full of them. And they were betting Spain.

Before I went to bed Friday night the

odds had climbed to five to two on Zimmerman. By noon Saturday the influx of cattlemen had battered those odds down to even money. At noon, the Ascension Mine declared a holiday. That was cheaper than paying wages to men who weren't working anyway. The other mines saw the logic of that and followed suit and a couple of thousand miners, roaring down onto the town with a week's pay in their pockets, swiftly pushed the odds back to three to two and better on Zimmerman.

It was a madhouse. Poe swore in twenty deputies right after noon. I saw him an hour later and he said he needed twenty more but couldn't get them. The boys who might have served him were having too much fun.

Lefty said if he had guessed that the fight would catch hold so powerfully he would have built a high board fence around the ring, charged a flat admission price of ten dollars a head, and made himself a young fortune. As it was, he bought lumber and hired all the men he could persuade to work and set them to building grandstands. He said, "Every foot of ground I can cover with benches makes that much less standing room, so they're goin' to have to use the stands. I'll charge 'em a dollar a head. I won't be able to collect from more than half of 'em, but even so I figure to make a profit."

At ten o'clock, Lefty deserted his carpenters and went up to Spain's room in the Brill House. He came back chuckling. Spain's door was locked, he said, and there wasn't a sound in the room that he could hear. "That's what I call a fighter a manager can be proud of! They're blowin' the lid off the town on account o' him, and what does he do? He sleeps the clock around!"

There were five fights in the Paystreak alone before noon, all but one of them being between cowboys and miners. The fifth was between two wild-eyed punchers from over south of Lyman Junction. They were betting on Spain, both of them; but one puncher had a big gold watch on which he'd once obtained a ten-dollar loan from Sol Silverman, and his partner insisted that, for the sake of loyalty if for nothing else, he should pawn that watch and bet that additional ten dollars. The first man refused to part with the watch and the battle was on.

I'd hate to guess how many thousands of dollars were bet on that fight. Money was plentiful in Comanche then, and men who thought nothing of paying a dollar or a pinch of gold-dust for a drink thought nothing of betting a week's wages, or a month's. Zimmerman himself bet more than five thousand. Paula Doran's announcement of her engagement to Zimmerman, coupled with the fact that Paula had been seen with Spain a good deal in the past week, added to the grudge element of the affair and the sky was the limit.

IT WAS well past noon before we got any inkling of the possibility that the fight might never be staged. Lefty had his grandstands well under way by that time, so he named one of his carpenters foreman and trotted off to the Brill House again.

I went with him. Not that I suspected anything. I simply wanted a clean shirt out of my room. Spain's failure to appear had started a still small voice of warning in my mind, but I'd refused to listen. I'd told myself that Spain had gone to bed last night with a sick heart and a troubled mind and was probably spending the morning making up for a sleepless night.

But I stopped at the head of the stairs, delaying my turn toward my own room until Lefty knocked at Spain's door. He got no answer and I was walking toward him when he knocked the second time. He turned to look at me.

"He don't answer," he said. He looked puzzled and a little hurt.

I was beside him now and Lefty must have read my fears in my face. I saw the color leave his cheeks. He said, "I'll get a key!" and whirled.

I didn't wait. I bent my head and threw my right shoulder hard against the door just above the lock and the wood splintered like the shell of an egg. I was two full steps into the room before I got my feet under me. Lefty was right behind me before the door stopped swinging. Neither of us spoke. The room was empty.

I mean, empty. Spain was gone, of course. The bed hadn't been slept in. But Spain's things were gone, too. Of course, a man traveling by horseback doesn't exactly clutter up a room with a lot of luggage, but Spain had carried saddlebags and there should have been a dirty shirt, and a clean one, a comb—things like that. There wasn't. We opened the bureau drawers and the old mahogany wardrobe, and they were empty. It took us a little while to digest that fact.

"He's gone!" Lefty said blankly.

I heard my own voice in that room, too, but what it said won't bear repeating and has little bearing on the story. It must have been a good two minutes after we smashed the door in before I saw the paper on the table. I picked it up and a yellow bill fell out of it. I looked down at the bill, lying on the floor at my feet, before I looked at the paper, and that in itself shows how rattled I was. It was a twenty-dollar bill.

The paper bore two words: "Room rent." They were in pencil, printed in big black letters. And that was all. No signature, no message—nothing.

I never got the shirt I went after. It was hours later before I even thought of it, and then I saw that I was wearing the same torn, dirty one I had meant to change.

We went downstairs, Lefty and I, and hauled the hotel night-clerk out of his bunk in the back office. Where was Spain? The answers we got told us nothing. Spain had come in about eleven and had gone to his room. He hadn't come down yet when the night-clerk went off duty. No, the night-clerk hadn't seen Spain come down any time during the night. No, nobody'd called for him. No, there'd been no commotion during the night.

We gave it up at last and swore the man to secrecy, and left. But I saw him reach for his pants as we turned away from him and I knew he had no intention of going to sleep again. I guessed, too, that the secret we'd given him would prove too much for him. But I couldn't see any way of silencing him, and anyway it didn't seem very important. The important thing was finding Spain.

A crew of plug-uglies, hired guards from the stamp-mill, were lounging in front of the Comanche First National as Lefty and I came out onto the street again. They had guns in their hands and were trying hard to look tough and important while four or five other men trotted back and forth between the bank and a buckboard in the street carrying foot-long ingots of gold into Bob Harvey's vault. A crowd of spectators stood around them, watching curiously, and I saw Zimmerman among them, laughing and making jokes. I hardly noticed them. I should have, because if I had thought I'd have known that George Poe would be overseeing that job, and it was Poe I wanted to see. As it was, I headed straight for Poe's office.

He wasn't there, of course. Lefty wanted to dash right back to the bank to find him, but I stopped that.

"We don't want to spread this news," I said, "until we're sure. You wait here. When Poe comes, hold him. I'll beat it over to the livery barn and see if Spain's horse is gone."

I did, and it was. Hank Johnson stumbled out of his little cubbyhole of an office at the front of the stable and I collared him. He was filthy and tousled and his eyes were bloodshot.

"Where's Spain's white gelding?" I asked him.

It took an effort for Hank's brain to function. He didn't know.

"Where's Freck?"

He didn't know that, either. He'd been on a bender last night and had been dead to the world ever since. Freck hadn't brought him his breakfast and he was going to wham hell out of the kid for that, if he found him. But Freck was gone. We looked, and he wasn't anywhere around the barn. His pony, Patches, was gone, too. Hank thought likely the kid had gone fishing. He often did, Hank said, when Hank got drunk.

I left Johnson mumbling curses and went back to Poe's office. Spain gone, and now Freck. I didn't know whether the two things had any connection or not, but it seemed likely. After all, it had been Freck who'd brought that story to Spain last night.

And yet—it didn't seem to make sense. If Spain had gone out of the hotel last night and had been killed, we'd still have found signs of occupancy in his room. His horse was gone; his things were gone. The money to pay his room-rent had been on his bureau. That seemed to prove that he'd run away.

Yet, if he was running, why would he take Freck with him?

IT WAS a good hour before Poe finally showed up at his office, and I spent that hour trying to sooth Lefty Sullivan.

When Poe finally did come, Lefty and I started hurling words at him and he looked at us as if he thought we were crazy. I didn't blame him. I guess Lefty was a little crazy by that time, and I know I was. Poe finally got Lefty to shut up and told me to talk.

I did. I told him everything. And when I'd done, Poe shook his head.

"Lefty," Poe said, "was that kid scared of Zimmerman? Of this fight, I mean? Was he?"

"Scared of Zimmerman?" Lefty's yelp had all the injured indignation of that of a pup whose tail has been stepped on. "Scared, hell! Why, damn it all, Spain would've licked Zimmerman! I tell you, that boy's the best damn natural fighter I ever saw! *Scared* of him? Say! Spain was fair lickin' his chops over the idea o' gettin' Zimmerman into the ring with him!"

"I reckon he was, at that," Poe said slowly, and I knew he was thinking of the announcement Paula Doran had made last night and of how that announcement must have jolted Spain.

I shook my head.

"Spain thinks Brick Zimmerman's The Hood," I said. "That means he thinks Brick killed his dad. You know damn well he wouldn't walk away from *that.*"

"He'd better not," Poe said sharply. "Damn him, he's got this town a-boilin' like it never boiled before. If he don't show up tonight there'll be a riot! We've got to find him."

Well, we tried. We got Tom Olliphant and a couple of Poe's deputies that could be trusted, and Tuck Taylor and Dave Samuels, and we tried. The trouble was, we didn't have any starting point. You can't trail a man unless you've got a trail to start on. We knew that, and we were licked before we started. But we kept trying. And all the time, the sun kept sliding down closer to the tips of the Shogun hills and the town kept boiling up and up, nearer and nearer to the rim of the kettle, and the time kept getting shorter.

Poe and I had just finished a swift but thorough search of all the questionable houses in town—all the places where we thought a man might be tied up and hidden—when Paula found us.

She looked at me and then she looked at Poe, and her face turned a shade whiter. It had been pretty white already. That was the first thing I had noticed about her.

"So it's true," she said. "He's gone."

Well, it didn't surprise me much. For the last hour or two, everywhere we'd gone Poe and I had met the question, "Where's Spain?" We'd tried to grin and be mysterious and reassuring, but it hadn't worked. The news was out. You could see it in the sneering, triumphant faces of the miners. You could see it in the black, resentful looks of the cattlemen. You could hear the whispering: "Spain's gone! Run out! No fight tonight; Spain's run away."

I nodded. "Gone—shanghaied—I don't know. All I know is, we can't find him."

"But you've got to!"

She stopped, and I saw her eyes brim full of tears. She didn't sob; she just stood there and looked at us.

She said, "I'm sorry. You're doing all you can, of course. I know that. But—"

Poe said, "Look here. You said last night that you was aimin' to marry Brick Zimmerman. From what I hear, if Spain was to show up in that ring tonight there's at least an even chance that Brick would take a lickin', physical and financial. Looks doggone strange t' me, you cryin' your eyes out over Spain at this late date. I'd like to know—"

Something in her eyes made him stop talking. I know now how easy it would have been for her to blast Poe's arrogance. But she didn't. She said, "Uncle George, I love him. That's why."

THE tears still glistened on her cheeks, but she wasn't crying.

"I'm going to marry Brick Zimmerman. But I love Dal. You'll please never tell him that, either of you. But it's true. And, don't you see, if he's gone—if he's run away—it must have been because he didn't want to fight the man I'm going to marry. And he mustn't do that. He mustn't!"

Poe stared at her.

"That don't make sense," he complained. "You love Spain, but you're marrying Zimmerman. Hell, Paula! That—that's wrong!"

"It's to right a wrong that I'm doing it," Paula said. "But never mind that. The thing now is—"

"To find Spain," Poe said. "I know. But look, Paula. Two wrongs can't make a right, you know. Your marryin' Zimmerman to right a wrong—that don't make sense."

Paula laughed. It wasn't pleasant laughter to hear, somehow.

"Oh, that's funny! You and your copybook maxims!" Her laughter broke off on a jagged note that verged precariously upon hysteria. She caught herself and laid her hand on George Poe's arm. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that. Only—you'll find him, won't you?"

Poe shrugged.

"We'll keep on tryin'," he said flatly.

So Paula turned and walked away from us. Watching her made me feel suddenly old and helpless.

I said, "There's no use trying to keep it a secret any longer. Spain's gone; there'll be no fight. Maybe if we tell it now, before this town gets screwed up any tighter than it is already—"

But Poe said, "No. They suspect that there's somethin' wrong, but they don't know. We'll wait. Maybe Spain'll show up. I don't think so, but there's a chance. And, if he don't show up, the best time to handle this mob'll be when I've got 'em gathered together in one place where I can talk to 'em. Maybe if I can get up in that ring tonight and talk I can calm 'em down. Maybe, too, we can find out somethin' then about Spain. Maybe somebody saw him, or some sign of him, or heard somethin'. It might be somethin' they wouldn't think about; some little thing. But if we asked

'em, got 'em to talkin'— No, we'll wait. We can't help anything by talkin' now."

CHAPTER XVII

WILD TOWN

BRICK ZIMMERMAN fell in beside me as I walked toward the Brill House on my second attempt to change that torn shirt. It was dark by then, and still we'd found no trace of Spain, and I was tired to the bone. Zimmerman walked up the stairs with me and followed me into my room. He was sitting by the window and he had a grin on his face when I got the lamp lighted and looked at him.

"I hear your fighter's run out on you," Zimmerman said.

"My fighter?"

"Yeah. You bet on Spain, didn't you?"

"What if I did?"

"Okay." Brick's grin widened. "It's your money. Only, now that he's run out on you—"

"Run out or was dragged out?" I asked sharply.

"You askin' *me?*" Brick said.

His tone of injured innocence didn't go with the look on his face and I swore at him. He laughed at me.

"It's all right, Mac," he said. "It's no secret, your not likin' me. What's the old sayin'? Somethin' about necessity makin' strange bedfellows?"

He stood up then, and laughed, and walked toward the door. He opened it and stopped and looked back at me. "You have tough luck with your young hopefuls, don't you? Jack Poe and now this Dallas Spain. You're sentimental, Mac. That's all that's wrong with you."

"You'd better be damn glad I am!" I said savagely. "Get out of here, Brick. I'm sick of lookin' at you."

He got. But I could hear him laughing as he walked across the hall into his own room, and it made me furious.

I did the things I'd come upstairs to do, taking my time about them, and I heard Zimmerman leave before I finished. I waited until he'd had plenty of time to get out of the lobby and then I put on my hat and locked my room and walked down the hall and knocked lightly on Spain's door.

I got no answer. I hadn't expected one, but there was just a chance that he might have slipped in without being seen. He hadn't. The room wasn't locked, and it was empty.

Lefty Sullivan looked up swiftly as I entered my private office in a back room of the Paystreak, but he looked down again at sight of me. I guess he got the answers to the questions in his mind just by looking at me. I was pretty glum.

Lefty said, "I'm sorry, Mac. I ought to be behind the bar. I couldn't face that gang out there."

I said, "It's all right, Lefty," and looked at my watch. It was nine o'clock. The fight was scheduled at ten.

The next hour is one I never like to think about. The rumor that Spain had disappeared had grown to more than a whisper now and the spirit of the town had changed. It had been wild before, but it had been harmless, just the flaring up of tempers on edge with excitement. It had seemed important and dangerous enough then, but I'd have given anything to have that excitement now in place of this tense sullen calm.

The town was split now into factions. There'd be a group of cattlemen in one place and a group of miners in another; never a group of miners and cattlemen together. That's bad. As long as men can mingle together, even in argument, there's hopes for them. When they split into separate camps, each outfit casting black looks at the other, it's time for noncombatants to start looking for shelter. And that time had come in Comanche.

The Paystreak happened to be a cattleman's hangout, so that's the side of it I saw. Not half of the men milling

around in front of my bar that night had ever seen Dal Spain, but they had accepted him as their acknowledged champion and they had pinned their hopes on him, and their money. They could've stood his being licked, maybe; but his running out on them left them at the mercy of the miners' jibes. It was a sort of smear on cowboy honor.

Usually I enjoyed mingling with the crowd in the Paystreak. The feeling of swift-pace movement there thrilled me; the noise, the hearty greetings, the good-fellowship, were all pleasant and mildly flattering. But not tonight. My office, dark with Lefty's gloom, was bad enough, but when I stepped out again into the main bar the atmosphere there made my skin prickle as if I had hold of the two poles of a powerful battery. It tightened my muscles and stretched my nerves and shortened my breath. Men turned to look at me; long searching looks. "Well, Mac? What d'you think?" I shook my head.

What could I tell them? All I knew was that Spain was gone. I didn't know whether he was dead, or had been shanghaied, or had run away. I might have my suspicions but I couldn't prove them. If I could have proved them, I wouldn't have dared. Telling that crowd that Spain hadn't run out on them of his on free will would simply have hurled the cowboys into an avenging war on the miners now instead of later.

I stood it as long as I could and then I did some running away, myself. The street wasn't much better, though, once I had reached it. I'd thought that, by keeping in the shadows, I could avoid those questioning, vaguely accusing eyes. But there weren't many shadows. Every window up and down Fremont Street was ablaze with light.

I FOUND Poe in the Neuces Bar. It was jammed with miners. The thing I noticed first when I entered the Neuces was the difference in the temper of that crowd as compared with the crowd in the Paystreak. These miners were jubilant. They weren't making a whole lot of noise about it, but you could see it on their faces. When ten o'clock came, if Spain failed to show up, these men would have a long-sought taunt to fling at cattlemen and they were looking forward to it.

I thought, "Yeah, and a lot of you will get lead answers to your jokes, too!" But it wouldn't have done any good to tell them that. They'd have said that they were just as rough, tough and deadly as any gang of cow-hustlers that ever forked leather, and they'd be delighted to give a demonstration of same against any and all comers. And they wouldn't have been far wrong.

Poe hadn't heard anything. He was looking at that crowd of miners when I found him and he was breathing hard and scowling. He looked at me as if he hardly knew me, shook his head to the question I asked him, and walked away from me. I knew he was feeling what I felt and visualizing what was going to happen when ten o'clock came, and knowing that he wouldn't be able to stop it. I felt sorry for him.

Then I saw Zimmerman. He was standing over by the end of the bar, grinning, his big head thrown back. I didn't know before that a man could strut standing still, but Zimmerman was doing it. He winked at me.

It was a quarter of ten when I walked out of the Neuces. It must have been a good fifteen minutes later, what with answering questions and all, when I got to the Brill House. So it was mighty close to ten o'clock when I climbed up the steps to the hotel porch and turned and saw Dal Spain riding down Fremont Street again.

He'd just come past the corner of Fink's General Store. Seventh Street wasn't lighted, which is how he'd come the length of it without being recognized. But he'd no sooner hit Fremont, riding

under the bright light hanging from the signboard on the corner, than somebody yelled, "There's Spain!"

It was that yell that made me turn. I did some yelling myself in the next five minutes and so, I think, did every other man in Comanche. Buildings all along Fremont Street emptied the way a beehive empties when you pound on it. Cattlemen took one look at Spain on that white horse of his, and yelled. The miners yelled, too. Give them credit for that. They would have enjoyed having something to taunt the cowboys with, but they were glad to see Spain. This way there'd be a fight, and a fight was what they'd come to see.

I started down the hotel steps toward Spain, but I soon thought better of it and climbed back to the porch again. I never could have reached him through that howling mob. Spain himself had trouble enough making any progress, and he was on horseback. The white horse moved daintily, picking his way and tossing his head, and Spain sat erect in the saddle, smiling a little. He reached up once and lifted his hat and the answering roar from the crowd flustered him and he flushed and put the hat on his head again.

He was halfway to me before I saw Freck Johnson sitting back of Spain's saddle, his arms around Spain's waist.

They reached the hotel porch at last and Spain lifted Freck down and then dismounted. I grabbed him and pumped his hand. I don't know what I said to him, but it doesn't matter; he couldn't have heard me. He grinned at me and nodded, and turned and raised both hands above his head. But it was a good long time before that crowd would hush.

But when it did the silence following made my ears roar. Spain's voice came through that hush, clear as a bell.

"Sorry I'm late, folks," he said. "Now I'm here, I won't keep you waitin' much longer. You all head for the ring. I'll be there almost as soon as you are."

They yelled some more. All the way up stairs to Spain's room we could hear them yelling, but the sound was moving now; moving away toward the ring.

I don't know how George Poe and Lefty got through that crowd in the street, but they were right behind us when we topped the stairs. Lefty grabbed Spain's hand.

"Boy," he said. "Boy, we thought—" He sort of choked.

Spain grinned at him.

LEFTY ducked into his own room and came out again, carrying a pair of fighting trunks and a bathrobe. We went into Spain's room then—Poe and I, and Lefty, and Spain, and Freck Johnson—and I closed the door and locked it. I saw Spain shoot one quick look around the room, but he didn't say anything. He started to undress.

It was Poe who finally asked Spain where he'd been. Spain looked at me. "You've told him what Freck told us last night?"

I nodded.

"When I came up to my room after that," Spain said, "I had a hunch that I was walkin' into something. Thought at first there might be somebody here waitin' for me. There wasn't anybody here, but there was a letter."

"A letter?" Poe said.

"Yeah. From Paula." Spain reached for his pants. Lefty was hovering over him, fussing with him, but Spain dragged a sheet of paper out of his trousers pocket and handed it to me. Poe and I read it together.

"This ain't Paula's handwritin'," Poe said sharply.

"I never saw Paula's handwriting," Spain said, "but I knew that wasn't it. So I—"

But Poe wasn't going to let him leave anything out. "How'd you know that, if you never saw her handwritin'?"

Spain grinned. "That note says, 'Dear

Mr. Spain'. Paula's been calling me Dal for some days now. I didn't figure, even after last night, that she'd get so formal all of a sudden. Then the thing ain't worded right. She says she don't want her father to know. If Paula had written that she'd have said she didn't want her *dad* to know. Besides—" Spain flushed a little.

"Besides, Paula and I spent an evening sittin' on the steps of that schoolhouse. Paula knew I'd know which schoolhouse, and where it was. Whoever wrote that note didn't know that. He took the trouble of directin' me."

Poe grunted.

"Go ahead," he said.

"Well, you know why I came here in the first place. So does the man I'm after. He knows me, but I don't know him. At least, if I do I can't prove it. Only way I can prove it is to catch him with the proof on him. To do that, I've got to play his game. I figured this note was his. So I did just what the note told me to do, only I didn't go ridin' up to that schoolhouse from the front; I slipped up on it from the back. There was a reception committee of two waitin' for me." Spain glanced at me. "It was Freck's two; the fat guy, and the little one with the mustache."

Lefty was wrapping Spain's hands with the tape now and Spain stopped talking for a minute to watch him. Poe snapped, "Go on!"

"Well, what I didn't know was that I had a bodyguard." Spain smiled. "You see, Freck didn't think we took his warning seriously enough, so he was standin' guard. He saw me leave the hotel and saddle my horse, so he saddled his pony and followed me. I'd just stepped out around the corner of that schoolhouse and was findin' out I'd just about bit off more than I could chew when Freck showed up. He'd swiped his old man's gun, and he came a-shootin' and a-shoutin'. Sounded like a whole troop of cavalry!"

Spain grinned, then sobered instantly.

"The way I see it," he said, "Freck saved my life."

"Didn't neither!" Freck said stoutly. "You'd already downed the fat man, and you'd winged the little one and knocked the gun out o' his hand. All I done was t' keep the little one from gettin' away. Saved your life? Shucks! I thought I'd *killed* you! That ol' pistol o' dad's is heavy, and Patches was runnin' and with him bouncin' me and that ol' gun buckin' and jumpin' the way it did, I didn't know *where* I was shootin'. And you fell, and——" Freck stopped for breath.

"You see," Spain said, "I didn't know Freck was with me and, when he came bustin' into things, I thought he was Enemy Number Three and I hit the dirt. The little guy—Mister Mustaches, Freck calls him—saw me go down and he started high-tailin' it for parts unknown. He'd have made it, too, only Freck rode that paint pony of his slap over him; knocked him down and held a gun on him till I got there."

Spain grinned. "He was so scared of Freck's gun he was almost ready to weep on my shoulder for rescuin' him!" Spain looked at Freck. "Remind me first thing in the morning to go and turn that jasper loose, will you, Freck?"

Freck nodded solemnly.

Spain looked at us. "Well, that's all of it. Only I didn't see much point in comin' back and lettin' whoever wrote that note know that his scheme had failed; he might take another shot at it. I didn't have any dates before tonight anyway, so Freck and I took Mister Mustaches to an old deserted mine shaft Freck knew about and we holed up there for the day. We'd have been back here in plenty of time, only Freck's pony strayed off somewhere and we couldn't find him. Huntin' for him is what made us so late."

"But *why?*" Poe asked.

I said, "Hell, Poe! It's pretty plain.

They were tryin' to keep him out of this fight."

Spain looked at me. "You're wrong, Mac. Those men weren't out to kidnap me. This room proves that. Somebody's cleaned it out; took all my things. They wanted it to look as if I'd run away. That means they didn't intend for me to come back."

He stood up then, naked except for his fighting trunks and his shoes, and reached back to slip his arms into the robe Lefty was holding for him. His hands were taped, and I remember seeing the muscles run smoothly under the skin on his shoulders.

"They meant to kill me," he said flatly. "I'm dangerous to somebody here in Comanche, and he figured this was a good time to do away with me. Now, when it'd look as if I'd ducked this fight."

He looked at his gun, hanging in its holster over the foot of the bed. He glanced at Poe.

"I'd be much obliged," he said, "if you and Mac would sort of keep an eye on things tonight. I'm goin' to be—pretty busy, myself!"

He grinned.

"Let's go," he said.

CHAPTER XVIII

"COME OUT FIGHTIN'!"

WE went down the back stairs and out of the Brill House by way of a back door into the alley, but even so we hit the fringes of the crowd before we'd gone a dozen yards. Men were running through the alley to avoid the main crush on the way to the ring and Poe halted a dozen or so, fellows he knew and could trust, to form a sort of bodyguard. I swung Freck Johnson up to my shoulder and our gang of huskies linked arms to make a sort of flying wedge with Spain and Lefty and me and Freck in the center of it, and we bored in. Poe led the way.

I'll never forget my first sight of that ring. Lefty had set a tall upright at each corner of the ring and there was a light at the top of each pole, with a bright new dishpan back of it so that the ring was spotlighted. More lights hung along the back side of the Paystreak and down the side of the adjoining building and under them I saw a surging sea of men. There was a towering wave on the north and another on the south where Lefty's grandstands stood, and elsewhere the space was packed with milling men.

They made way for us grudgingly, yelling, reaching through to claw at Spain, laughing, wishing us luck, defying us, and our bodyguard bent their heads against the storm. Sound rose in waves that beat like surf against the ear. I never saw or heard the like of it.

We made the ring finally and climbed up through the ropes and I got a chance to really see that crowd. Zimmerman was coming now. I saw him, the center of another struggling whirlpool that moved barely perceptibly toward the ring. Still another lane opened off to the left and Belle Holderness came down in, her head held high, ostrich plumes tossing atop her hat, her girls behind her. They walked primly, wearing small polite fixed smiles, speaking to no one. They filed neatly into a space reserved for them in one of Lefty's stands and sat down, a splash of color on that sombre wave of humanity.

They weren't the only women there, either. The others weren't so colorful as Belle, but I saw them; one here, one there, another yonder; the wives of cattlemen and mining men and business men. This thing was bigger than a mere prize fight; it was a social event.

Zimmerman's party had reached the ring now and I watched them climb up through the ropes. Brick had a bright colored Indian blanket over his shoul-

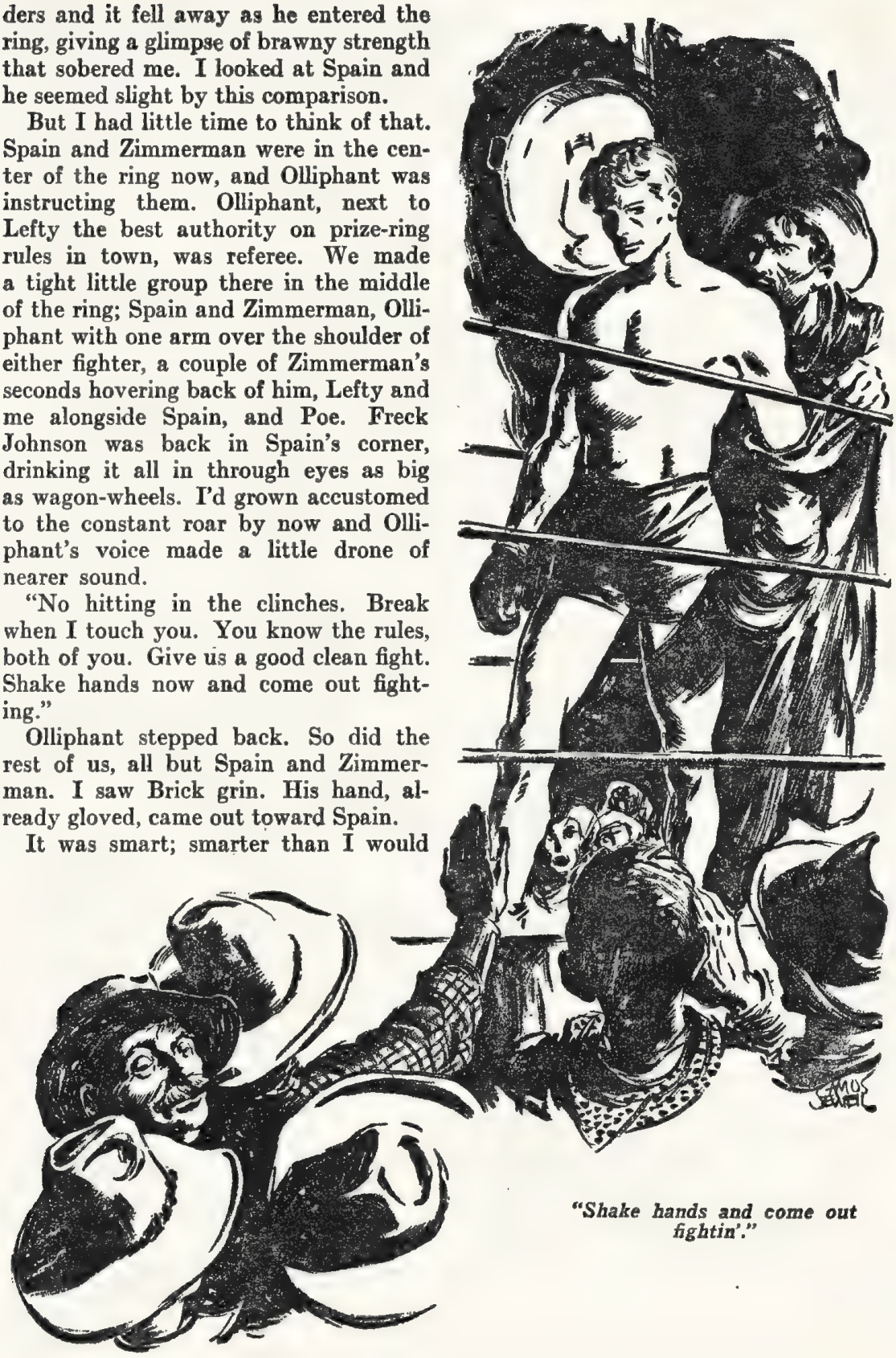
ders and it fell away as he entered the ring, giving a glimpse of brawny strength that sobered me. I looked at Spain and he seemed slight by this comparison.

But I had little time to think of that. Spain and Zimmerman were in the center of the ring now, and Olliphant was instructing them. Olliphant, next to Lefty the best authority on prize-ring rules in town, was referee. We made a tight little group there in the middle of the ring; Spain and Zimmerman, Olliphant with one arm over the shoulder of either fighter, a couple of Zimmerman's seconds hovering back of him, Lefty and me alongside Spain, and Poe. Freck Johnson was back in Spain's corner, drinking it all in through eyes as big as wagon-wheels. I'd grown accustomed to the constant roar by now and Olliphant's voice made a little drone of nearer sound.

"No hitting in the clinches. Break when I touch you. You know the rules, both of you. Give us a good clean fight. Shake hands now and come out fighting."

Olliphant stepped back. So did the rest of us, all but Spain and Zimmerman. I saw Brick grin. His hand, already gloved, came out toward Spain.

It was smart; smarter than I would



"Shake hands and come out fightin'."

have given Brick credit for, that offer of his hand. He waited, too, until he was sure the crowd would see it. It made him look magnanimous; the man who'd won Paula Doran, offering his hand to the man who had lost her. That's what the crowd saw, anyway.

Spain turned away from him.

I knew, in that brief instant before it happened, that that was what Spain would do, and I didn't blame him. It wasn't that he was a bad loser. It had nothing to do with Paula, or Brick's engagement to her, at all. It went far back of that. It went back eleven months or more, to a lonesome canyon down in Texas; to a night, still earlier, when gunfire lashed across a lamp-lit room. It went back to a coroner's inquest; grim-faced men peering down at the marks of rifling on heavy, battered bullets. To Spain, it wasn't a question of shaking hands with a successful rival; it was a question of shaking hands with his father's murderer. I didn't blame him. I'd have done the same thing.

A roar went up that made the previous noise seem insignificant. That roar was one of fierce, unholy joy. They'd come, those men, to see a fight; a grudge fight, not a boxing match. And this was it. No shaking hands; no quarter.

Brick shrugged.

BOTH fighters were in their corners now, leaving Olliphant in the center of the ring trying to silence that crowd for the announcements. Lefty bent over Spain, talking to him in a low swift undertone. Spain sat relaxed, eyes closed, a little smile upon his lips.

Looking at him, I had no trouble then in seeing that he wasn't big. Zimmerman, across the ring from him, looked like a bull; a thin-coated bull, oddly pinkish-white where the sun hadn't touched him, but bulky, powerful. The muscles on his arms and shoulders stood out in heavy lumps. His wrists, red-brown against his untanned flanks, looked huge. But Spain was fit. Hard muscle lay in little washboard ridges across his belly and the long muscles of arm and shoulder ran smoothly under silken skin when he moved. He was fit, and he was fast.

I remembered the way he'd handled Zimmerman before, the way he'd taken Lefty's attack afterward. Speed. Remembering that, I pinned my hopes on it.

"La-a-a-a-dee-ez . . . and gentlemen!"

This was Tom Olliphant, doubling up the duties of referee with those of announcer.

"Tonight . . . we have . . a fight . . . to a finish . . . at catch weights . . . between two men . . . who need no introduction! A finish fight . . . Marquis of Queensbury rules . . . three-minute rounds . . . one-minute rests between rounds . . . no hitting below the belt . . . no hitting in the clinches In this corner—Brick Zimmerman!"

Zimmerman walked out into the center of the ring, raised both hands high above his head He took his time, grinning, bobbing his head, accepting tribute from the crowd. He got it, too.

It was while Zimmerman was taking his bows that I saw Paula. She was standing near the end of the north grandstand, perhaps ten yards back from the ring, and she must have come alone, for no one near her seemed aware of her. She wasn't watching Zimmerman's antics there in the center of the ring. She was looking at Spain.

"And, in this corner . . . the cowboy's hope—Comanche Kid—Dal Spain!"

Spain stood up, raised one glove shoulder-high, sat down again.

I could hear Lefty now, his voice a rasping undertone cutting through the uproar: "Remember, now; rush him. Go out fighting. Hit! Keep hitting! Take a punch or two if you have to, but hit! Roll under his punches and swing for

his guts. He's expectin' you to waltz. Go in and fight him!"

It went on and on, the tumult and Lefty's voice, both endless. I don't know whether Spain heard what Lefty was saying or not. He didn't seem to hear it, or anything. He was smiling.

I looked for Paula again. She wasn't where I'd seen her first and it took me a minute to locate her. I found her finally. She was sitting at the end of one of the rows of seats in the north grandstand and Dave Samuels was standing beside her. Samuels must have noticed her and given her his seat.

Spain was on his feet now. The stools were out of the ring. The bell made a sharp tin-panny sound and Lefty yelled, *"Go after him!"*

Spain crossed the ring on dancing feet. Zimmerman came up to meet him, head low, scowling. Spain shot a left, a right, a left, a right. Short punches, lightning fast. They stung. I saw amazement on Brick's face.

I didn't hear the noise of the crowd from then on. It was there, a pulsing, crazy, constant roar. But I didn't hear it. I closed my ears to it. In spite of it, I heard the swift hard smack of blows; the shush of flashing soft-soled feet; the grunting breaths of fighting men.

Zimmerman fell back before that charge of Spain's. It surprised him, upset his notions of Spain's style of fighting. He covered up; took a hard swinging right to his middle that carried him back another step, felt the ropes against his back—and charged. Head down, arms swinging. A bull.

He carried Spain across the ring ahead of him. A glove caught Spain high in the face; shook him a little. Yet, even as he went back ahead of Zimmerman's rush, I had the feeling that he was guiding it. He moved like a cat, rolling with this punch, ducking another, shooting his hands in piston-like stabs that left red marks on Brick's pale hide. And, just before he touched the ropes, he stepped aside.

Brick hit the barrier and I thought again how like a bull he was. His eyes were closed. He roared, and wheeled.

Spain caught him twice as Brick steadied himself, lifted Zimmerman's guard, shot a hard right to the body. Brick charged again.

A drumming sound beside me took my eyes off the fight for an instant and I saw Lefty, his left fist clenched, beating a steady tattoo on the canvas floor, his right hand making short erratic motions in the air, his mouth working. He was grinning.

Again, Spain slipped aside and let Zimmerman go into the ropes. This time, Spain's right as Zimmerman turned had more power in it. It stopped Brick momentarily. He shook his head and charged again.

The bell.

SPAIN stepped aside in mid-ring this time, dropped his hands and walked to his corner. He was breathing fast and he was beaded all over with fine sweat, but he was clean. There wasn't a mark on him.

Lefty was on him like a terrier pup. Water. Towels. Deft fingers digging, slapping, rolling the muscles of Spain's legs. A stream of talk.

I looked at Zimmerman. That first round had been a whirlwind. Brick's chest was lifting jerkily. There was blood on his jaw from a cut lip. A red spot just above the buckle of his trunks showed where those body punches of Spain's had targeted.

The bell came long before I had expected it. Spain went out of his corner like an arrow off a bow-string. Again that lancing left and right caught Zimmerman. This time it staggered him. I saw his head jerk back twce as those blows landed. He was off balance. He caught the ropes, steadied himself, took

another left and another right to the face, and charged. He wasn't through, Zimmerman wasn't. He wasn't even badly hurt. But he was dazed. He hadn't looked for this.

That second round was a duplicate of the first. Zimmerman charging; Spain letting himself be swept ahead of those charges, stepping aside at the last instant to let Zimmerman go into the ropes. But even as he went back ahead of those rushes, Spain's fists were stabbing under Zimmerman's guard.

And Zimmerman was learning. He wasn't shutting his eyes now; he was swinging, but his swings were better aimed, harder to dodge. Hard swings that hurt when they landed. One of them caught Spain just above the belt and it broke the rhythm of his footwork for a moment. He clinched. It was the first clinch of the fight.

Olliphant broke them. Spain opened Zimmerman's lip with a smashing uppercut and danced away from him. Brick charged again. Spain went back almost to the ropes, stepped to the left. This time, Brick didn't hit the ropes. He jerked to a stop just short of them, and wheeled, and lunged. He caught Spain squarely on the jaw. It was a long, diving, stiff-armed blow without much snap in it, but it had all the weight of Zimmerman's body back of it. Spain dropped.

The bell again.

Lefty was in the ring in a split second, but Spain was already on his knees. He was shaking his head, but he was grinning. I heard him say, "I'm all right. He caught me off-balance, that's all. I'm not hurt, Lefty."

"You crossed your feet!" Lefty said accusingly.

"I guess I did," Spain said, and grinned at me.

"All right. Forget it. You hurt him some that time. Keep after him. Another round like that one and he'll be ripe."

I looked at Zimmerman. Spain's right had cut his eyes sometime during that last round and he wasn't pretty to look at. The red spot above his belt-knuckle was bigger, too. But he was eager now. That last-second knockdown had heartened him. He wouldn't lean back to let his seconds work on him. He was leaning forward on his stool, glaring at Spain, his lips drawn back.

I dreaded that next round. The time between seemed longer this time and I caught myself cracking the knuckles of my left hand the way I do when I'm excited. I was excited, all right. I thought, "If Spain gets through this next one he's got a chance."

The bell came finally and Spain was gone. I said before that Zimmerman was learning. He was set for that charge this time. Spain saw it and checked, but Brick got him with a flailing right. It set Spain back, took some of the dance out of him. He clipped Brick with a pretty left, but he was slower getting away and Brick got him with another roundhouse swing. The glove slid back of Spain's head, but Brick's forearm landed like a club across Spain's neck. It flung him back into the ropes.

The next minute was a bad one. Zimmerman grunted—you could hear that grunt of satisfaction clear across that ring—and closed in. Spain was hurt, and he had his back to the wall. He went under Zimmerman's first punch and tried to clinch. Brick shook him off. I saw Spain's right bore into Zimmerman's body as they went together, but it was a short punch without the drive of leg-muscles behind it, and Brick weathered it. Olliphant was hovering over them now. Brick swung and missed, and swung again. Spain tried to roll with the punch but the ropes blocked him. He took it on the side of the face.

Lefty wasn't beating the canvas now. He was rigid. Only his lips were mov-

ing. I knew he was shrieking some command at Spain but I couldn't make out what he was saying. Then, through a second-long break in that ear-splitting roar, I caught the words: "Go down! Go down and take a count! Go down! Go down!"

Yes, I could see the sense in that. If Spain went down, he would take a count of eight or so; eight precious seconds of rest. Too, Zimmerman would have to step away from him, so that when Spain came up again, he'd have ring-room.

I looked back at the ring in time to see Spain rip free of Zimmerman and I thought for a second that he was safe. But he wasn't. Brick sidestepped and caught Spain with another right. Spain hit the ropes again, this time in a corner.

I thought it was over, then. Spain was jammed back against the corner-post and his chin was down against his chest and his arms were sagging. Zimmerman took a second or two to measure him and I saw Brick grin.

I thought, "Another punch will finish it," and I wanted to close my eyes to keep from seeing it. They wouldn't close. I saw Zimmerman come up on his toes a little, ready to put every pound he had behind that next punch. And, out of the corner of my eye, I got a glimpse of Lefty Sullivan.

The crowd, too, must have sensed the crisis, for there was silence suddenly, complete and absolute. But it was the expression on Lefty Sullivan's face that startled me most. Lefty was grinning!

"Watch this!" he said. "Don't miss it, Mac! I think—"

(To be concluded)

AROUND THE WORLD ON A DOLLAR BILL?

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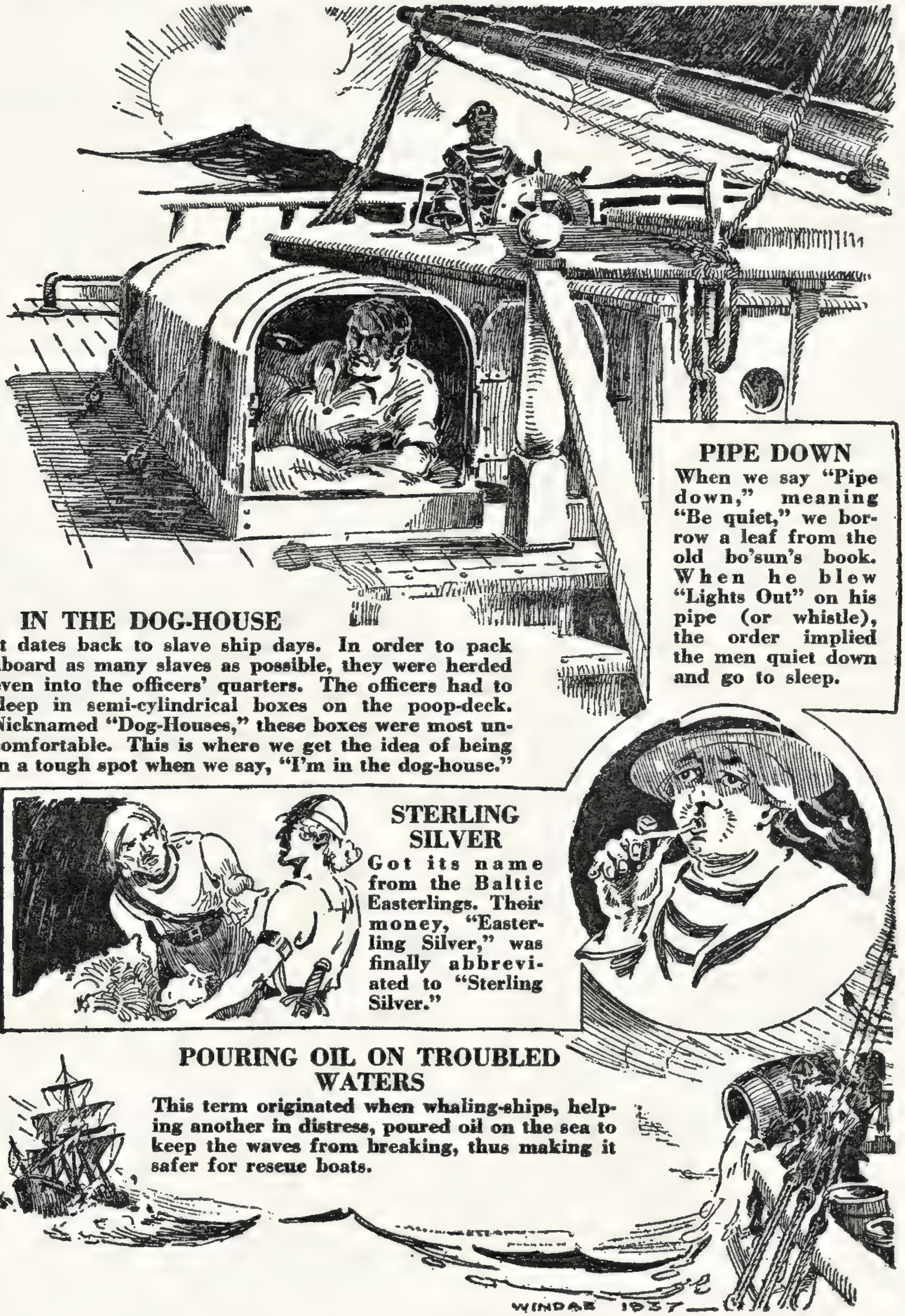
TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS



IN THE DOG-HOUSE

It dates back to slave ship days. In order to pack aboard as many slaves as possible, they were herded even into the officers' quarters. The officers had to sleep in semi-cylindrical boxes on the poop-deck. Nicknamed "Dog-Houses," these boxes were most uncomfortable. This is where we get the idea of being in a tough spot when we say, "I'm in the dog-house."

PIPE DOWN

When we say "Pipe down," meaning "Be quiet," we borrow a leaf from the old bo'sun's book. When he blew "Lights Out" on his pipe (or whistle), the order implied the men quiet down and go to sleep.

STERLING SILVER

Got its name from the Baltic Easterlings. Their money, "Easterling Silver," was finally abbreviated to "Sterling Silver."

POURING OIL ON TROUBLED WATERS

This term originated when whaling-ships, helping another in distress, poured oil on the sea to keep the waves from breaking, thus making it safer for rescue boats.

WINDAS 1937

Stumbling, falling pulling their hearts out—still they fought on.

ENDURANCE

*by HANSON W. BALDWIN

SHE WAS shored and braced and buttressed against the floes; forward her yacht's bow was backed with heavy baulks; amidships her sides were nearly twenty inches thick. She was a stout ship with a picked crew; her reaching yards with their gasketed canvas were leanly strong; the men who took her through the Golden Gate that July day of 1879 were like their ship's timbers—seasoned and tough.

George Washington De Long, Lieutenant-Commander, United States Navy, who for years had "hoped and planned and worked to one end: to lead an expedition to the Pole", was on the bridge as the *Jeannette*, with her crew of thirty-three men, cleared the bay and stood towards the north.

They went gladly to face unknown dangers, but they met instead a cold monotony. As early as September 6 the *Jeannette* was locked fast in the ice pack east of Herald Island. For twenty-one months they drifted, *"by time forgot"*, terse comments in De Long's journal the only record of their plight. Dunbar (William Dunbar, ice pilot out of New London) became ill and recovered but slowly; Danenhower (Master John W. Danenhower, executive officer) had operation after operation on his eyes. The enforced monotony rasped taut nerves; Iversen, a coal heaver, went temporarily insane; even the puns of Jerome J. Collins of the New York *Herald*, the expedition's meteorologist and the Russell Owen of his time, became sour and jang-

* The italicized quotations in the body of the story are all from "The Voyage of the Jeannette—The Ship and Ice Journals of George W. De Long" as edited by his widow, Emma De Long. I have also consulted "To the North" by Jeannette Mirsky, the Dictionary of American Biography and other standard sources.—Hanson W. Baldwin.

ling to men long imprisoned by the Arctic pack.

On June 11, 1881, nearly two years after their hopeful departure from San Francisco, the stout ship gave up the fight shortly after they had drifted past —and named—two bleak islets (now known to men as Henriette and Jeannette). She had been ground and buffeted by the white steel of the bergs for twenty-one months; for twenty-one months she had drifted some three hundred and forty miles to the northwest—far, far from the Pole, but into dread seas uncharted on any map.

But at last the old *Jeannette* was punched and holed, caught in a rift between two closing floes. She heeled far over to starboard; her rail crunched under water; the tapering yards which once arched to the sweet pull of yachting canvas canted downwards towards the ice. It was the end.

Camp was made on the ice; boats and provisions gotten off her; she fought hard, but she was dying. On June 13, after the floe had split with a roar like thunder in the middle of the camp, her mizzenmast went by the board. At 3 A. M. her smoke pipe top was nearly awash; at 4 A. M., as the watch called: "There she goes; there she goes!", the ice of the Arctic closed above the last wreckage of the *Jeannette*.

Gone now the hope for fame and glory; ahead only the struggle for life.

The cold monotony was ended. The trial of strength had started; endurance now was all that mattered.

THE *Jeannette* went down in Lat. 77-15 N., Long. 155 E., more than five hundred miles from the Lena River Delta on the Siberian Coast, the nearest land at which human settlements were reported.

The march to the south started on June 18, the morale good, the sick better. The men traveled as light as possible, with only sixty days' provisions—pemmican, Liebig, ham, tongue, tea, coffee, lime juice, bread—and with no extra outer clothing. The load to be man-hauled was tremendous, as three boats—the first and second cutters and the whaleboat—had to be skidded across the ice against the day when the party made open water. It was the Arctic summer, the worst possible season for ice travel—*"terrific roads, soft and deep snow, ugly ice openings—"*.

The start was made across ice rifts, through knee-deep slush. They had twenty-three dogs and boat sledges, but the huskies were not strong enough to haul the heavy boats; the men bent to the hardest work in the world. They started with waving pennants and braw mottoes: *"Nil desperandum"—"In hoc signo vinces"—"Comme je trouve"*—were the words scrawled on the sledges.

Stumbling and falling, pulling their hearts out, the thirty-three struggled across the ice. Rain fell; fog wreathed the hills and hummocks of melting ice in sepulchral gray mist. Sled runners buckled and bent; men fell into rifts between the ice, were marooned on floating cakes, slipped and stumbled—but pressed on. The snow they melted and drank had a high salt content, even when scraped from the highest hummocks; they were ill with diarrhea; the sickest were barely able to stagger. They had to retrace each road seven times, for there were not enough dogs and men to pull the heavy loads simultaneously. They built ice bridges to span the narrow leads in the pack; when a wide rift opened, they ferried across the open water in their boats. They made crawling progress—sometimes three-quarters of a mile, on good days a mile and a quarter, two miles, or a little more.

On June 25th, a Saturday, De Long took a meridian altitude at midnight. He worked out his position and then went back over his figures; there must be some mistake. Carefully he checked and re-checked, then frantically he checked

again. Latitude 77-46; there was no mistake. They had started in 77-18; for one week they had been mushing, hauling, struggling, to the south; now they were twenty-eight miles further north than when they started; the pack was drifting faster northward than they could travel south. And—*"The country to the southward of us is terribly wild and broken. Mr. Dunbar, whom I sent ahead to reconnoiter, reports that it is such a jam and so full of holes that he could not crawl over it. However*—Nil desperandum".

They changed course to the southwest to compensate for the pack's drift, and slowly they pushed towards Siberia, these men whom the world had forgotten. Wet and cold; cold and wet—*"There is so much snow water all over the ice that we cannot find a place dry enough to make our rubber blanket a sufficient protection."* July 4th, the nation's birthday, was a good day; they made the unprecedented distance of two and one-fourth miles southwest in eight hours twenty minutes.

Liebig's—beef tea—was their chief comfort; dreams of sunshine and of home, punctuated by bitter thoughts, their chief reflections.

". . . it will be hard . . . to be known hereafter as a man who undertook a Polar expedition and sunk his ship at the 77th parallel."

By mid-July they had commenced to supplement their rations with seal and bear meat, but the small gain was offset by the capsizing of a dog sled and the loss of two hundred seventy pounds of pemmican. And in July they sighted land—land not on charts. For two weeks they struggled towards it; on July 29 at 8:30 P. M., standing on a barren island in the Arctic Sea, De Long took possession of it in the name of the President of the United States and named it Bennett Island. *"I now call upon you to give three cheers"*. The landing cape De Long named in honor of his wife—Cape Emma. They explored the island and in early August they started on, sledging and boating, the hardest work in the world.

By now there were only two dogs, Snoozer and Kasmatka left, of the original forty that had been taken on the expedition, but the pack had opened; they were making better progress in the boats. The item "Provisions Available" began to appear more and more frequently in De Long's journal; on Aug. 12, there were only sixty five and one-half pounds of bread, enough for four days, although of their staple, pemmican, there still remained a thirty-eight day supply. De Long was thirty-seven years old on Aug. 22; his birthday dinner was like all other dinners, tea and pemmican. They pushed on toward the southwest.

At long last, on Aug. 30, they landed on barren, ice-covered Faddeyeff Island of the New Siberian group, and *"our last ration of lime juice was issued this morning"*. There was rock and snow and ice and rain and the ruins of an old hut, nothing more, but their hearts leaped at this first sign of human life they had seen in the Arctic seas. They rested, such as they could, for twelve days, and started on in their boats, making still for the Lena River Delta in Siberia. They pushed on, heavy beards hiding the drawn skin on their cheeks, their feet numbed and splitting and swollen from continuous wetting, their strength ebbing out in the long battle with the northern sea.

Past bleak islands they slaved, now dragging the boats over ice, now rowing and sailing across open leads of water, now camped in pain and misery and gaunt starvation. The winter was hard by; gales and blinding snow lashed the thirty-three; their feet and toes—frostbitten, covered with chilblains, bruised and cut—became bent and black and broken; some of the men hobbled almost barefoot on the ice. A bloody trail across the frozen Arctic sea.

But De Long never lost faith in a God Eternal, strong to save; on the first Sunday of September, 1881, with his men perceptibly weakening, De Long, standing by a camp-fire, read divine service. Men held steaming stockings towards the fire to dry; others huddled to its warmth—

"Almighty and Most Merciful Father; we have erred and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep—".

There was in De Long a Puritan streak of strength and purpose, of inexorable attention to duty; he never forgot that he and his men were a part of the United States Navy. Naval regulations required the reading of the long-winded Articles of War on the first Sunday of every month; he had done it up until now on the ship or on the ice. But with his men sagging about him, their dull, glazed eyes and the gaunt cheek bones high-lighted in the flicker of the camp-fire, he decided to postpone it *"to a more favorable occasion".*

They shot a few ducks, a gull and some *"miserable little sandpipers."*

On September 11, the ninety-first day since the *Jeannette* was crushed in ice, the thirty-three were camped on Semenovski Island, preparing for their last lap to life—or death. De Long repaired his omission of the previous Sunday, read the Articles of War, and then held divine service. He prepared a record: *"We are all well*—(what of Dunbar; what of De Long himself) *the fact is, my feet are swollen with cold, and my toes are broken out with chilblains and I am unable to get around very much—"*

"—have had no scurvy—(but the men were bearded spectres, every move a hardship—starving, freezing)

"—and hope with God's aid to reach the settlements on the Lena River during the coming week. We have yet about seven days provisions, full rations—."

(Tea and pemmican—pemmican and tea; the Liebig gone, bread long gone—tea and pemmican, pemmican and tea.)

De Long signed it, placed it in a tin case; left it on Semenovski Island, and they started on the last long lap.

IT was all boating now; the ice was broken and caked but pressed in packs upon the mainland; a gale was needed to scatter it. A gale was the hope of their salvation, for they could not make a mile a month in their weakened condition across the tortured and piled-up grinding pack. The gale came, but to some it brought death, not life.

De Long and Ambler, the surgeon, were in the first cutter with Collins and eleven men; Melville, the engineer, had charge with Danenhower (still on the sick list) of the whaleboat; Chipp (Lt. Charles W. Chipp) and Dunbar were in the second cutter.

De Long had ordered the boats to keep together, but the gale came humping across that shallow sea where the silt from the great river Lena had dumped itself into the frozen ocean. It came humping and roaring with the cold breath of the Pole; spirtles of spindrift and flying scud, which froze on the gunnels and stiffened the sails, flew before it. The ice cakes leaped and danced on the kicked-up combers; the jam was broken.

The boats flew on the gale's wings; sixteen miles that first day they ran through a heavy sea, but then towards dusk they could not stay longer together. The whaleboat, fastest of the three in such weather, was pulling ahead of the cutters. She must drive ahead if she were not to be filled and sunk, or broached to, by following seas. All the boats were close-reefed, but the driving nor'easter sent them hurrying and skittering before it, scattered them on the face of the waters.

Melville was waved on by De Long. Chipp in the second cutter was far astern. Melville saw her, the little second cutter, whose strakes and bilges had

It was worse in the boats. . .

been battered by sharp ice ridges and bulging hummocks on that march of countless days, rise high on the back of a nasty yellow comber. She was far off, dim and tiny in the angry dusk, with Chipp at the tiller and seven men crouching on the bottom boards. She was lonely with her human freight, high on the back of that wild comber, yellowed with the silt of the Lena, flecked with the white-green ice pans, spurred by the howling wind from the Pole. There Melville saw her, as though briefly framed against immortality—saw her for the last time.

Those others sagged into troughs—the whaleboat plunging before the gale, the first cutter, deep-loaded and yawing, but the second cutter rose no more on wave crests behind them.

DE LONG, with his near frozen men in the first cutter, knew only that the gale had done in a few hours what months on the shifting frozen surface of the Arctic Sea had not been able to do—scatter his command. But his orders had anticipated such an eventuality; all boats had been ordered to make their own way towards settlements on the Lena River; he had confidence in his officers and was not uneasy.

Cramped in the first cutter, De Long and his men—their feet in icy bilge water which slopped over the gunnels continually—were near frozen and near swamping. The step of the mast carried away; they had to ride the worst of the gale out to a sea anchor during the night of the twelfth. On the thirteenth, with the sea still snarling, they put canvas on her, only to lose sail and yard. Still undaunted, they patched up a jury rig with a sled cover for a sail and stood on to the westward before the fuming seas.

It was worse in the boats than on the ice. They made progress before the wind, but at terrible expense of mind and body. Wet and cold, exposed to the full force of wind and sea, without heat or fire, and so cramped that movement was almost impossible, the starving men endured terrible suffering. De Long's hands, wet and freezing, were disabled on the fifteenth; Ericksen, a seaman, had to twirl the thumb screws on the sextant and take the noon latitude.

On the sixteenth they came closer to the vast half-frozen morass of the delta; young ice splintered against the strakes of the stout old cutter; seals were numerous. Towards evening they grounded in eighteen inches of water, with a piled-up mass of thin scales of ice jammed around them. They spent a miserable night in the boat, and on the seventeenth tried to work the boat closer to dry land, but grounded again and again. They built a small raft, put their scant remaining food and equipment on it, lowered their cracked, swollen feet through the thin ice into knee-deep water and started to wade ashore.

It was horrible going. They were done in, staggering with exhaustion and deprivation. They sank into the yellow mud, while the ice water, sucking at their shins, drained the vital warmth from them. They had not strength enough to bend their knees; almost stiff-legged, they ploughed like automatons through the young ice, the sharp scales splintering and breaking against their knees. For a mile and a half they struggled to reach the bleakest land in the world, to drop half-dead, but with the life spark still eager, on the good earth beside a fire.

They left another record at their beach camp, near the end of their long trail:

> Monday, 19th., September, 1881
> Lena Delta
>
> The following named 14 persons belonging to the Jeannette (which was sunk by the ice on June 12, 1881, in Lat. N. 77-15, Long. E. 155) landed here on the evening of the 17th instant, and will proceed on foot to try to reach a settlement on the Lena River: De Long, Ambler, Collins, Nindemann, Gortz, Noros, Dressler, Ah Sam (the Chinese cook), Alexey, Ericksen, Kaack, Boyd, Lee, Iversen. A record was left about half a mile north of the Southern end of Semenovski Island buried under a stake. The 33 persons composing the officers and crew of the Jeannette left that island in 3 boats on the morning of the 12th. inst. (one week ago). That same night we were separated in a gale of wind, and I have seen nothing of them since. . . .
>
> . . . We must now try with God's help to walk to a settlement, the nearest of which I believe to be 95 miles distant. We are all well, have four days provisions, arms and ammunition, and are carrying with us only ship's books and papers, with blankets, tents and some medicines, therefore our chances of getting through seem good. . . .

A gallant document, which gave no hint of their real plight. Afoot, immured in the water-coursed, marshy delta land, uncertain of their exact location, uncertain even of their rough maps, the only guide to this bleak forgotten land that civilization scarcely knew, the emaciated party started its search for fellow-men. With them went their one remaining dog, the life about out of him, gaunt like themselves.

The howling winter was closing down on this region that God forgot, but the half-drowned land was not yet clad in the hard white armor of the cold, and at nearly every step the haggard men broke through the thin ice and sank into freezing water and oozing muck. They had left much of their equipment and even their sleeping bags at the beach camp, but even so the loads were far too heavy for the enfeebled; three rests in the first day's march of fifteen minutes each were no good; the men were completely used up, with "*Lee groaning and complaining, Ericksen, Boyd and Sam hobbling*" on their blackened and swollen feet.

Ericksen was the worst; his feet were near gangrene. On the 20th, with the party hemmed in by arms of the river and toiling through marsh and sump-like swamp crusted with ice, the progress was terribly slow, with Ericksen hobbling along a foot at a time. They halted before noon, with four miles done towards their vague goal, a village whose exact location was miles beyond its position as calculated by De Long. Had they

but known it, that painful trip was taking them day by day further from the nearest habitation—another **village** northwards along the beach.

Life was going from them, ebbing from their tortured feet; death was creeping upward towards their hearts.

"Everyone of us seems to have lost all feeling in his toes and some of us even halfway up the feet. That terrible week in the boat has done us a great injury."

They opened their last can of pemmican on this day; De Long cut the rations sharply to make it suffice for four days' food.

"Then we are at the end of our provisions and must eat the dog, unless Providence sends something in our way. When the dog is eaten . . . ?"

THEY came on two huts on the one hundred first day after the *Jeannette* had foundered, but there were no human beings there. There would be two days rations left after the morrow's breakfast, and three men were badly lame. But De Long found justification for his so earnest belief in a Divine Providence when Alexey, the hunter of the group, shot two deer. The meat, with three days' rest in the huts, put new life in the men. But they needed more than that; not so easily could the human constitution recoup from the awful rigors of the North. On September 24th, their first day's trip after their rest, they made only five miles; the men were too exhausted to toil further.

September 25th—*"a wretched night, no sleep, no rest, cold and stiff"*. They ate the last of the deer for dinner and made twelve miles on the 25th. De Long was the last into camp; he lagged behind to encourage the limping stragglers, their feet balled up with great masses of snow and ice which stuck and froze to the wet boots.

On the 26th an ulcer developed on the sole of Ericksen's foot. Their dinner was four-fourteenths of a pound of pemmican, and tea boiled again from the tea leaves they had used in the two previous meals.

" . . . three meals more food and the dog . . . But still the unfaltering trust in God which I have had all along makes me hopeful that some relief may be afforded us . . ."

Again his prayers were answered. Nindemann and Alexey bagged a deer on the 27th; they had a grand feast; but *"the ulcer in Ericksen's foot has sloughed away so much of the skin as to expose the sinews and muscles. The doctor fears that he may have to amputate one half, if not the whole, of both feet"*.

They found a two-day old moccasin print in the snow. So close had life passed them by. By the twenty-eighth they were completely exhausted, but they marched twenty minutes and rested ten, dropping in their tracks, panting, eyes glazed, minds dulled, feet numb. They reached a "dirty hovel".

September 29th, was the one hundred ninth day since they had left the comfortable wooden walls of the old *Jeannette*. They waited in the hut, trying to devise a means of crossing a quarter-mile branch of the river Lena, whose thousand mouths spewed muddy, half-frozen water courses across their track.

The next day Ericksen was worse. *"The doctor (Ambler) commenced slicing away the flesh after breakfast, fortunately without pain to the patient, for the forward part of the foot is dead; but it was a heart-rending sight to me—the cutting away of bones and flesh of a man whom I hoped to return sound and whole to his friends"*.

They started on the first day of October, 1881. Back in the United States James Gordon Bennett and his New York *Herald* had recorded the death of the twentieth president, Garfield; there in the north, Jerome Collins of the *Herald* was stumbling to his death. Ambler, the surgeon, continued his crude oper-

ation on the blackened things that had been Ericksen's feet; they put the sick man in a sled litter and dragged on. De Long left another brave record in the hut:

" . . . *we have no fear for the future . . .*"

By the third of October, Ericksen was delirious, muttering incessantly in Danish, German and English, his whole life passing in a spate of phrases from his lips.

They broke through the ice into deep water—De Long, Collins and Gortz—and the water froze on them, casing them in that thin and deadly armor. There was a little raw alcohol left; they took some of it in shuddering sips, but De Long couldn't get it down. They killed the half-starved dog and stewed part of it for supper. And this was the one hundred thirteenth day.

During the night Ericksen, surging in his sleep, got his gloves off and froze his hands.

A gale roared up; whirling eddies of snow and bitter wind beat about them; they came to a large hut, like all the rest, desolate, dirty and vacant, and took shelter against the storm.

In front of a great fire, their bodies still trembling in the shuddering convulsions of the cold, they stood, with heads bowed, or knelt, with shoulders sagging, while De Long read prayers for the sick—

"O Father of Mercies and God of all comfort . . . we humbly beseech Thee to behold, visit and relieve Thy sick servant . . ."

One hundred sixteenth day—*"Called all hands at 7:30"* (still the disciplined routine of the Navy). *"Had a cup apiece of third-hand tea with one-half ounce of alcohol in it. At 8:45 our messmate Ericksen departed this life. Alexey came back empty-handed. . . .what, in God's name, is going to become of us?"*

They buried Ericksen in a hole in the river ice; they were too weak to dig a grave. De Long's flag he had carried so far went around that tortured body, now at peace; they fired three volleys in the air, and on the bank placed a rough board:

"In Memory
H. H. Ericksen
Oct. 6, 1881
USS Jeannette"

It was all they could do.

They struggled on, used tea leaves and neat alcohol their food; terse comments in the journal the record of their lives and sufferings, brief phrases reporting the wax and wane of hope. . .

"Doctor's note: Alcohol proves of great advantage; keeps off craving for food, prevents gnawing at stomach and has kept the strength of the men, as given—three ounces per day . . ."

They marched, they endured, with the winter closing down around them; they marched and faced their future—fighting.

NINDEMANN and Noros were the strongest. Some of the others were almost done; De Long sent them ahead for relief, traveling light; there was nothing heavy to burden them. The two men took their blankets, one rifle, forty rounds of ammunition and two ounces of alcohol; the party left behind cheered them as they left. It was the last gesture.

De Long and Ambler and Collins and the eight who were left pushed on, the entries terser in the journal now:

"Crossed creek. Broke through ice. All wet up to knees. Stopped and built fires. Dried clothes. Under way again at 10:30. Lee breaking down . . ."

Alexey shot some ptarmigans; the lean flesh made soup for the famished men and kept that vital spark glowing so little longer.

One hundred twentieth day—*"Last half ounce alcohol at 5:30; at 6:30 sent Alexey off to look for ptarmigan. Eat*

deerskin scraps. Yesterday morning ate my deerskin foot-nips . . ."

They followed Nindemann's tracks, with Lee, almost dying on his feet, begging to be left.

They staggered on, camping now and resting as the gales swept down, resting in a hole in the earth they found on the river bank. They looked for game, vainly; they ate glycerine and drank hot water—"*all hands weak and feeble, but cheerful. God help us*".

They boiled Arctic willow in a pot of water and drank the infusion, but now even to flex a muscle was a terrific effort; the men were used up merely by gathering wood for the fire. Weaker—weaker . . .

October the fifteenth was a Saturday, and the one hundred twenty-fifth day. For breakfast they had willow tea and two old boots boiled and boiled in the same pot. "*Alexey breaks down, also Lee . . . Signs of smoke at twilight to southward.*" Again so close did life pass them by.

They camped by an empty grain raft, with Alexey, the strong man and the hunter, dying on his feet.

Ambler, the surgeon, baptized Alexey on Monday as he lay dying, and De Long again read prayers for the sick. It was Jerome Collins' fortieth birthday; perhaps back in New York some of his friends remembered. It was well that they could not see him now—this Russell Owen of his time, who would never write this story of an epic of the north. Collins' birthday and Alexey dying, and Collins not long to live. Alexey died at sunset; they covered him with an ensign and the next day, with snow his pall, they laid him on the frozen surface of the river and covered him over with slabs of ice.

They pushed ahead again on the one hundred twenty-ninth day, with the doctor picking the new camp. They cut up the tent to make foot-gear. They made camp by the bank of that dread river. It was the last camp . . .

Kaack was the next to go. He died peacefully sometime during the night of Oct. 20th as he lay huddled for warmth close between Ambler and De Long. There was nothing to eat. Again the leader of that forlorn expedition, who with so high hopes had left the Golden Gate more than two years before, read prayers for the sick . . . for Lee was going . . .

October 22nd was a Saturday. The doctor, Collins and De Long carried the bodies of the dead a few feet away from the camp; there could be no burial, except the pall of winter, for these dead.

That Sunday they slept or dozed, half-conscious. It was beyond the commander's strength to read all of the divine service, but, his voice stuttering and failing from weakness, he recited a few of those great phrases which have comforted the sick, the discouraged, the helpless and the dying in ages past.

The slow hours dragged on. Day followed night and the sun set beyond the snow banks in the west, while men breathed more faintly with the passing hours. The terse entries gave no hint of suffering.

Huddled now in this drab camp they lay side by side, these living, and those better off, the dead. Thus they lay and were to lie under skies eternal which unchanging and unchanged looked down alike on triumph and tragedy, gestation, birth, death and pain . . .

Oct. 30th was the one hundred fortieth day since the *Jeannette's* stout strakes had been crunched and splintered in the embrace of the Arctic—back home they would soon be inaugurating Chester Alan Arthur as the twenty-first President of the United States; back home they would be thinking of Thanksgiving and the Christmas time. The fleet would be cruising, and—but here in the North the only reality was ebbing life; the end of that to which all living men come. Oct. 30th was Sun-

day, but there was no divine service then, only a quavering last entry in a journal of failure:

"Boyd and Gortz died during night. Mr. Collins dying . . ."

NINDEMANN and Noros won through to life. Lemming, ptarmigan, decayed fish, Arctic willow tea, alcohol and a boiled piece of sealskin kept the warmth in their bodies, gave them the strength to endure. By Oct. 19th, as De Long shifted to his last camp, Noros and Nindemann could not move for more than five minutes at a time. At noon on the 22nd, as De Long's party lay dying, one by one, in their last camp miles away, a native found the two men in an abandoned hut where they had stopped to rest.

Feebly they tried to make him comprehend that the last of an expedition, the end of a gallant dream, lay shattered and broken somewhere in the snow behind them, but he could not understand. He went away, but came back some hours later in a reindeer sleigh with two other men and food and clothing. But they could not understand . . . The natives took the two sailors to a tent settlement—but even there, despite repeated signs and gestures from the two men, who were all but dead themselves, the Siberians could not understand. And soon it was too late . . .

The sailors were taken to Bulan, and arrived there on the 29th, the day before the last entry in the journal. There Melville found them on November 2—Melville, who had had a whaleboat and who had come with his small crew to land and safety in a part of the Lena Delta, far to the southeast of De Long's landing place. His party too were sick and ill and all but dying, but Melville had pushed ahead as fast as possible to seek his chief. With frozen feet he went to De Long's relief; with natives he back-tracked on Nindemann's trail, but missed De Long and reached North Bulan on November 11. Melville's feet were so badly swollen that he could not wear moccasins, but he searched in vain until November 27th, when he knew either that hope was gone for De Long forever or that he had found refuge with natives. Not until then, when it was already far too late, did he give up his search until the winter storms were over.

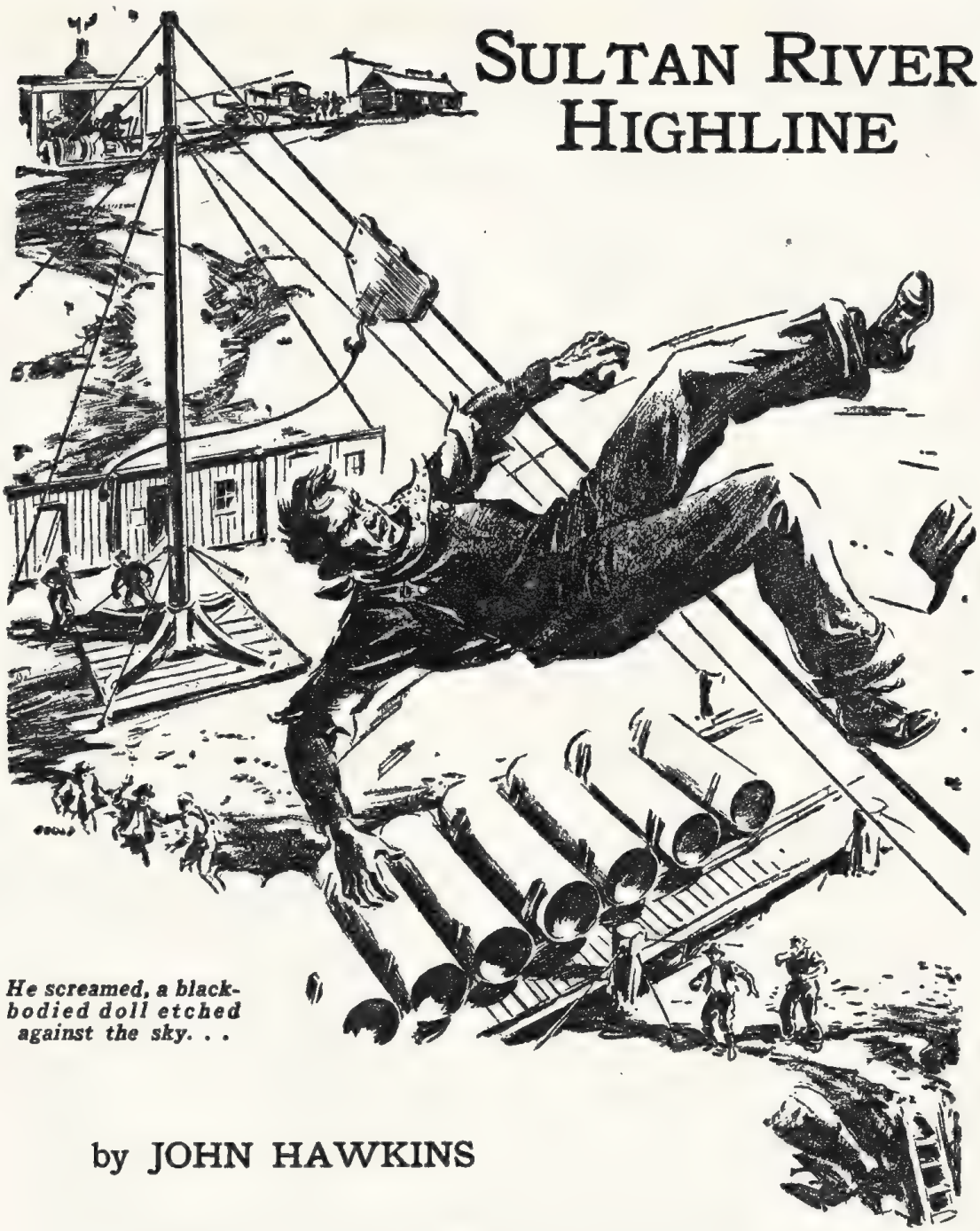
He took it up again with the help of several men the next spring, while Danenhower and nine men, one of them crazy from his hardships, were en route back to America. Melville found them the next spring, buried in the snow at their last camp, one arm of De Long's stretching above the snow surface, as if —even at the last—to summon help. De Long, the commander, Ambler, the surgeon, and faithful Ah Sam, the cook, were lying together.

They were high up on the river bank, where they had apparently climbed with their last strength so that the spring freshets would not carry their bodies off to sea. Below them and around the ashes of two large fires were the others, those seamen who had made an epic march only to death. On Collins' breast was a small bronze crucifix; among the camp things was the prayer book whose strengthening words had sustained De Long until the last. The *Herald* had the news at last, but not beneath Collins' byline.

They buried them there in that desolate land on a little whaleback rock southward of Mat Vai, but not for long were they to sleep there. In 1887 their remains were unearthed and brought back to their country, and now a great cross of stone in the Naval Academy cemetery is monument to De Long and his shipmates of the *Jeannette*.

His was no great triumph of discovery, his not the exultation of success. But his was a magnificent failure, and, as his widow wrote, *"the world is richer by this gift of suffering."*

SULTAN RIVER HIGHLINE



He screamed, a black-bodied doll etched against the sky. . .

by JOHN HAWKINS

AN ANGRY, black-browed God must have built the Sultan River country on a Monday. Any construction man could tell you that. The whole job has that to-hell-with-it-day-after-payday look.

The deep canyons that drop straight down to some nameless, white-frothed stream are spite work and nothing else. So are the high, rock-ribbed hills that jut skyward between them. A rugged, barren, treeless land.

Time and the rivers took the sharp edges off the rock and deepened the canyons, but on the whole it was pretty much the way the original builder left it when Pop Gordon, owner of the Northwestern Construction Company, moved his equipment in on the Sultan River pipe line job.

Pacific City needed water, countless millions of gallons of pure water from the snow fields. And what's more to the point, that lusty, growing, strident city had the money. You could find contractors to bid on a highway to the moon, if you had the line staked and the estimate money in the bank.

That's the way it was here. The survey crews had staked the line; the money was waiting, and Northwestern had the contract. And there was plenty of laughter among the old-timers.

Laughter about a water pipe? Sure. They knew how that pipe line—fifty miles of it—had to climb the foothill slopes to the mountains. How it had to cling to steep canyon walls, had to cross the high flats to the jaws of the gorge from which Sultan River began its journey to the sea.

A job for men, for Swede and Longman and the bullnecks. Big stuff, that pipe—all steel, welded, sixty inches in diameter. But pipe has to be big to carry the full water supply for a city, and expensive—it cost six dollars a foot before the construction cost was added. Try breaking fifty miles down into feet and multiplying by six. It's more money than I knew there was in the world. Me, I'm the timekeeper for Northwestern, the guy who saw the whole thing.

Dave Longman, Gordon's super, didn't arrive until the job was a week old, and then Gordon took him out to look at the canyon.

That canyon was the hook in the job, the reason the old ones laughed. Sultan River looped around so that the line had to cross it twice. The upper crossing wasn't bad, but the lower one was a nightmare. The road from Pacific City dead-ended there, where the ground stopped being level and stood on end. Six hundred feet deep, a thousand feet wide, the canyon was a ragged knife that split the job right in the middle.

Twenty-five miles of pipe had to cross that hole. Pumps, welding outfits, tractors, a steam shovel, all had to get to the other side.

Longman said: "I'd better start the high-line next."

"You've got plenty to do," Gordon grinned, "Swede'll handle this. You can build the pipe racks, he'll do the rest."

"Swede? I thought—"

"He's a high-line man, and his crew know their stuff. They'll do all right. He's bringing me twelve hard-rock men for the tunnel, too."

Longman didn't argue, but his cheeks were flushed and there was an angry set to his jaw. Gordon was importing a man to take part of his job, and Longman didn't like it.

THE job really broke the next day, when work started on both ends of the first twenty-five mile stretch. The super kept the twisting mountain road choked with supply trucks. Big ones, little ones, roaring nose-to-tail from the freight yards to the supply piles. Pipe, cats, lumber, pumps, cable, everything the job needed was on the road, delivered to the gusty overtone of bellowing motors and sweating men.

Longman had plenty to do, but he found time for talk, and the whispered word got around. Swede was just another foreman. Longman was still running the job, by God, all of it.

And then he came!

It sounds flat to say it that way, but the whole job was waiting, wondering, and then one morning he was there. God, what a man! He was big now, but before the years had rounded the great width of his shoulders he'd been a giant. Old, sure, somewhere between fifty and seventy. His weather-darkened face didn't tell any more; his features might have been axed out of some dark, iron-hearted wood. His hair was white, and his blue eyes went through you like a cutting torch through tin-foil.

He was quiet too. The first day he said

a dozen words to Gordon and none at all to Longman. I think the super's hatred started there. He couldn't stand being ignored. He made one last try in the office just before supper.

"What'll you need in the way of supplies?"

Swede turned. "Nothing. We bring our own gear."

They did. Three big truckloads of it. Swede picked the site and helped his men unload. Men is the word. Big, deep-chested, bull-necked ex-loggers and sailors. Men who knew cables and rigging, men who worked the high places, high-line men. They were Swedes too, with the same light hair and blue eyes their boss had. All but one. Runt, the signal man, was small and dark.

They were a week stringing their cables and placing the donkey engine. A week of back-breaking, man-killing work, where wide shoulders had to take the place of machines.

They lived by themselves in one of the bunkhouses, the high-line crew and the tunnel men, and they left the rest of the camp strictly alone.

Longman found out about that the second day they were there. One of the riggers was coming from the tool shed past the pipe racks. The super had three men trying to get a length of pipe free of a jam and he yelled at the rigger.

"Hey, you, come up here and lend a hand."

The big man turned, smiled a little, and kept right on going. Longman yelled again, but the wide shoulders never stopped. The pipe crew didn't say anything, but there was laughter in their eyes. Longman wheeled and followed the rigger. The big man turned when he touched his arm.

"Why didn't you stop when I yelled?"

A slow, half-pleasant smile. "I work on high-line, not for you."

Longman couldn't get it. He watched Swede's crew day after day, saw them perform miracles with line and cable, work their hearts out for the old man who never gave them a direct order.

A week, and Gordon called the super into the office. "Pick out the stuff you'll need for the other side. We'll start the tunnel right away. Swede'll shoot it over for you. Then get a gang up here and start laying pipe down this side to the water. Swede rigged the high-line right over the job so he could place the pipe for you."

Two days, while the three-wheeled dolly shuttled back and forth on the inch-and-a-half cable. They moved tools, tractors, compressors, air-hose, pipe, everything that the two-hundred foot tunnel—which bored through the rock and gravel point just on the far side of the canyon—needed for a beginning. Then the canyon crew moved in, and trouble straddled the job.

THEY were welders and assembly men mostly, and they'd never seen a high-line. They didn't like it. Every time they looked up a load was moving across the canyon, right over their heads. The cable was too light, the loads were too heavy—hell, everything was wrong.

The high-line? That was simple enough. The main-line cable left the big drum on the donkey engine, went through double blocks straight to the top of a hundred foot spar tree. Then high across the canyon to the anchor point on the far side. This, the steel for their aerial railroad, when tight, was seven hundred feet above the water.

A three-wheeled dolly rode that steel, and the loads traveled in slings beneath this. The dolly was controlled by cables fastened to each end, so that it could be pulled either way along the main-line.

Spotting the dolly over the loading platforms was only a matter of slacking off the main-line and letting the weight pull it down. Then, when the dolly was ten feet above the loading platforms, the cable lay along the ground for a hundred

feet just above the canyon's edge and swung like a loose bow string over the hole.

When the big stuff started to move across you saw why Swede's crew hung so blindly on his word. This guy was good! From the control platform he could see only the canyon itself; for the rest he did by whistled signals. He took the loads away fast, picked up the line with a hammering motor, and shot them out over the canyon. They dropped, feather-light, on the other side.

Where he really showed his skill was in placing the pipe for the canyon crew. The big stuff settled down out of the sky as precisely as if he were placing matches instead of tons. He kept those lads busy, busier than they liked, and still found time to ferry plenty of equipment over the hole.

The hoodoo struck at noon. The welding crew were climbing out of the canyon just a few minutes before the cook beat the "Come and get it" on the gong. Swede's men were still working. I was close to the loading platform.

The men finished with the slings, stepped back. Big Dan, Swede's boss rigger, jerked a gloved hand up. Runt, watching from his vantage point, waited until the knot of men moved away from the canyon edge and the line was clear. Then the air whistle under his hand squalled.

"*Paaaweeee.*"

High on the hill the donkey engine clattered as Swede picked up the slack. The main-line cable moved like a snapping whip.

We saw him first as the line bellied. Saw the man clinging with both hands to the bucking cable and knew in that dizzy second that he must have been on the last steep pitch, climbing hand over hand up the cable.

He screamed as the line rose, shot him skyward; screamed again as Big Dan yelled and Runt's clawing hand found the whistle cord. Too late! The cable snapped taut as the whistle squealed. It flipped him upward, shook him loose.

He seemed to hang there, a black-bodied, scrawny doll etched against the sky, and then he fell. The scream came back, thin, wind-distorted, as he pinwheeled over and over back into the canyon. The wail, shrill and sharp, lasted for a clock tick after he vanished. Then silence for a single breath. Silence that exploded into a roaring chaos.

THE welding boys were motionless, stunned. They hadn't moved when Longman came plunging down the slope. He gained the canyon's edge only a step behind Runt.

"That was murder!" Longman yelled that as his leaping hand caught Runt's shoulder, spun him around, and his fist chopped flush against his mouth. Runt went back, fell. Longman was waiting when Runt sat up, lunged to his feet. Their two moving bodies met, blended. There was a single grunt, the splat of fist on flesh and the signal man sprawled on his face, colder than a wedge.

Longman was still crouched there, his red face screwed up into a scowl when Swede's deep voice bit through the clamor.

"Did you do that?"

"Damn him, he killed one of my men. When he comes to, tell him he's fired."

Swede's voice was rough with suppressed anger. "Not his fault. For three days we tell 'em stay away from main-line. They forgot. Runt stays."

Longman shouted: "He's through!"

The Swede shook his head and they faced each other across ten feet of bare earth. Waves of dull red crept up the super's neck. He must have known then that he was wrong, for he started to speak in his normal voice. The thing would have ended there, but some fool back in the crowd had to laugh. The super's words stopped in his throat. He

couldn't back down, not now. He charged head down, fists swinging at Swede.

It was over then. One big hand snapped out to wrap in his jacket and pull him close. A fist the size of a baby head-block smashed under his chin. Longman turned a loose flip-flop toward the canyon rim. Swede kept him from going over. Then they went down after the welder's body.

An hour later Gordon called them into the office. Swede, Longman, Runt, Big Dan and Meade, the boss welder.

Longman and Meade blustered, yelled and hammered the desk. Not Swede—he told it just the way it happened. Told it in a flat, hard, take-it-or-leave-it voice.

"They should know enough to stay away from that cable. We told them. Runt wasn't to blame and he's not fired. If he goes we all go." I knew then why his crew would go to hell for him.

Gordon listened to the rest, but in the end he stayed with Swede. "Tell those guys to stay away from that cable. He asked for it, just the same as if he grabbed a high-tension line, or stepped in front of a truck."

Meade colored: "We've got to work under that line. How—"

"Under it, yes, but it never comes close to you, not that far down. You do your part and they'll take care of theirs. We'll try it again tomorrow—but for God's sake be careful."

Gordon called Longman back after the others had gone. Gordon waited a long time before he spoke:

"You fool! Why can't you tend to your work and let them tend to theirs? Those guys know more about their rig than you'll ever know. You stick to laying pipe and this job'll get along a lot better."

Longman flushed, humped in his chair. His lips were cut, bruised, and one eye was swollen shut. "What about the welders?"

Gordon bit in: "I'm as sorry about this as you are, but I can get welders a damn sight easier than I can get another high-line crew."

THEY left it like that and for two days things went smoothly enough. Each tunnel shift got its footage. The steam shovel finished the ditching on the first section and crawled down near the loading platform on its endless tracks. The pipe gangs made real progress. The third day Pop Gordon left on an inspection trip of the other jobs.

The canyon shift said no more about the accident, but if the welders had forgotten it Longman hadn't. He'd fired a man and it didn't stick. Anger still burned in his eyes every time he looked out of the office window and saw the high-line.

He talked a lot and back of the barrage of words was the sullen knowledge that Big Dan had handled him like a baby, had cuffed him around with his open hand and then knocked him colder than a joint of pipe. I listened to a dozen crazy schemes for supplanting the high-line before Longman got his big idea. He found a sag in the canyon wall, a mile upstream, where a tractor equipped with a bull-dozer blade could gouge a tote road down to the water. He had to build a bridge and hack a road back up the other side. Pop Gordon was away and he didn't wait for an okay. A gang started work on it the next day.

And then the hoodoo straddled the Swede's shoulders.

A broken shaft on the donkey shut the high-line down for three days. That was the beginning. Then a pin worked loose in the head block at the top of the spar tree. A load of pipe was halfway across the hole when the main-line came free, dropped. The cable bit into the ground and the strain sent the donkey engine surging against the anchor lines. Far out, the sling load of pipe swayed under the bucking line. Swayed, rocked.

and finally stopped with no damage done.

The welders were swarming up out of the canyon by then. They'd dropped their tools and clawed up the steep slope to get away from the sling load of pipe above them. Nor would they go back until a temporary repair was made that enabled Swede to haul the pipe up to the platform on the far side of the canyon.

The high-line was down for another three days!

It wasn't sabotage. Men don't climb spar trees to knock pins from the head block, not when they could wreck the gear on the ground. No, it was accident, hoodoo, hard luck, or whatever you want to call it.

Longman grinned and went right on building his road. The chief was due back at the end of the week. Me, I watched the high-line. I could see the whole thing, the loading platforms and the crew working in the canyon, from the window above my desk. Why? When you've been around construction you know that hard luck comes in bunches.

The super stayed on Swede's neck. If the pipe sections for the tunnel were late a messenger climbed the hill with a note from Longman. The super didn't need excuses, he made 'em. There were new lines around Swede's mouth, but he didn't have anything to say. He fought bad luck and accident in a kind of a grim silence, but he did keep the supplies moving.

A terse wire came in the morning. "Arriving noon. Gordon." And at ten o'clock it happened. Maybe it was haste, maybe it was foul luck, maybe the hoodoo again.

The load of pipe—four fifteen foot sections—was not quite halfway across the canyon when the sling slipped. The load teetered and faintly I could hear the racing clatter of the donkey engine. The pipe tipped, jerked. Then tons of death spilled out of the skies.

The canyon crew fled like spindrift before the wind. The first pipe smashed a platform to matchwood, flattened two sections of pipe and knocked another hundred feet out of line. The jerking dolly had carried the rest clear. The big sections plummeted down, one, two, three, to land in the river and on the far shore. Then the rigging crew was hanging over the canyon's edge. One man turned, waved his arms.

His gloved hands scissored, crossed. "Okay, nobody hurt."

That did it. The canyon crew poured up out of the hole, wild-eyed, mad. They bunched near the top, started for the high-line, turned and came streaming back through camp.

I could hear Meade's strident voice. "Accident—hell, that was premeditated murder!"

THE job was in bad shape when Gordon arrived. I gave it to him fast. "Swede let a load of pipe get away over the hole. Nobody hurt, but the welders were scared to death. They don't want anything but Swede's hide. Swede goes or they do. Every welder on the job quit, and you can't lay a foot of pipe without them. I called the Pacific City office to try to get more men. No soap. They're all union men, and nobody with a card would step on the job. You'd have to pay the others strike wages and—"

He said: "That's enough," and stalked out the door. Longman was with him when he came back an hour later. The super was saying, "Two days more will finish the road. We can use sleds hooked in tandem behind the tractors . . ."

After Longman went out the chief used the phone for a solid hour. Then he turned to me. "We're licked. The union's got us over a barrel."

I didn't say anything and after a long time he said, "You've been friendly enough with Swede, you go explain to him. Tell him to stick for a couple of days, but to shut the rig down. I'll go to

town and see what I can do with that union boss."

Swede was in the bunkhouse when I found him. He didn't speak till after I finished. His crew were all watching him, waiting. The fierce glare of his blue eyes had dulled.

"Twenty years I've high-lined. Never did we leave till job was done. Never any trouble."

He stopped then and I went away. Gordon came back late that afternoon and Swede came down to the office. The chief tried to make it easy.

"We'll find something else for your crew, Swede, on the South Fork Job."

The old man's impatient gesture stopped him. "These fellas think we try to kill them?"

"No," Gordon floundered, "they think it isn't safe to work under—hell, man, I'm sorry, but they've got me tied up."

Swede was turning away when he spoke. "We'll take the rig down tomorrow."

We were alone in the office. Gordon's eyes were fixed on a spot somewhere above my head. "Kid, I'd have sooner have hacked his leg off. That crew's the best in the business."

"Maybe Swede's getting old."

"Maybe. Anyway, they're taking the rig out in the morning."

BUT they didn't. During the night the sky came down till it was hanging just over the office roof. Long before morning it was raining. A thunderous, gusty rain, the kind that only the Oregon mountains can deliver. Sheets of water turned the job into one swell mud puddle. We sat in the bunkhouses for two days and listened to the drum roll of the rain on the flat roofs.

The tunnel crew on the late shift were the first men to return to their job. One of Longman's tractors towed a sled loaded with pipe around the super's new road.

Drumming boots on the office porch woke Gordon and me before the door burst open. The chief's flashlight flicked on, outlined the mud-smeared figure that swayed in the doorway. It was Tony Elman, compressor man on the tunnel shift.

"Slide, boss!" The man was gasping for breath. His clothes were plastered with wet loam; his hat was gone, his eyes wide, frantic.

"What's this?"

"The whole damn side of the mountain slid in, buried the end of the tunnel! There's five men in there. The compressor's gone, so's the generator."

That meant there was no air hose in the pipe, and no lights. That slide was big or it wouldn't have come far enough out from the base of the hill to get the machines.

Gordon was already shouting orders. "Wake the men up. We'll need lights over there, and the bull-dozer, and shovels, and food."

Elman cut in: "Boss, we need the steam shovel. Nothin' else'll make a dent in the pile of muck in front of the tunnel."

Gordon stepped into hip boots, pulled them up, and reached for his slicker. "Where's the steam shovel now?"

"On this side, near the loading platform."

"Thank God, Longman's got his road built!" Gordon was swearing as he plunged out the door into the night. The sky had come down again and it was raining.

Within fifteen minutes seventy men were on their way across the canyon. I'd run a flock of errands, looked up tools, located a misplaced generator and a couple of hundred feet of wire. Gordon had gone across the canyon. I was heading for the path when a squat-bodied man whirled around the corner of a shed to slam head-on into me.

"Where'll I find empty gas drums? We'll need 'em for water."

"Huh?" I asked him, like a sap.

"For the shovel, sucker, on the way around."

I said something about the high-line and he laughed. "Gordon says the cable'd have to be twice as big to handle the weight. A thirty cat's the biggest thing they ever handled. Where's the drums?"

I told him and he piled off toward the racks. Up on the hill cat motors spat, back-fired and settled to their thunderous, deep-throated roaring as the engines warmed. One, a big seventy-five Diesel tractor, clanked past me towing an empty sledge. I pointed the way to the racks with my flash.

Every man in camp was awake and on the run. Trouble like this is one thing all construction men understand. It might have been any of us in that tunnel. The picture didn't need to be enlarged. We knew. Five men waiting in that tunnel. Solid rock at one end, crawling, water-soaked mud at the other. The thick blackness that would come when the flashlight batteries died. Then just waiting, waiting in the mud-choked pipe where a man couldn't quite stand up. There'd be inches of water on the bottom and they'd wait, hunkered down in the dark with their backs against the steel while nerves cracked and the air went bad.

Then, nothing but death. Aching lungs that strained for oxygen that wasn't there. The finish, face-down in six inches of water deep in the guts of a mountain that had suddenly come to life, trapped them.

The racing stutter of a generator engine split the night, and lights flamed on the far side. I could see the slide. Tony was plenty right; they needed the steam shovel. Men could never move that mud in time.

Then running men passed me on the trail. Men whose thin clothes rasped with the weight of caked mud. Big men. Swedes. The hard-rock men who worked the tunnel, and half the high-line crew.

A tight second of wondering where Big Dan, Runt and Swede were, and then I saw the lights bobbing toward the loading platforms and I knew.

There were seven in that group. Swede, Big Dan, Runt, the donkey fireman and two riggers. There was no shouting here, just grim, quiet purpose.

There were searchlights and throbbing motors ahead of them on the loading platforms. The fireman left the rest of the crew and took the path to the donkey engine. The others went straight to the center of the lights. The shovel fireman had steam up and the stack laid down a stream of sparks against a lowering sky. Rain hissed on hot metal.

They had their slings ready before Longman knew they were there. Then the super was slanting his long body against the storm, shouting, "Get the hell across the hole. They need help over there."

Swede's white head, bare in the rain, moved toward the shovel. "Three days you'll need to take the shovel around. They'll be dead then. We take it over."

Longman cursed: "You're crazy. You don't get this shovel on your haywire rig. You drop it in the hole and then we'd be stuck. Hell, it'd take a month to get another one in."

Swede didn't argue. His hand went out, just a blur in the dark. The crack was audible even over the rumble of the slow turning drums on the shovel. Longman half-turned, bent slowly and dropped in the mud.

Swede shouted at the shovel runner. "Back that rig on the platform." The man shook his head and then Big Dan and another rigger padded through the mud to join Swede. The shovel runner looked around helplessly, the blood drained away from his face, and he reached for the traveling gears.

That stiff cable came to life. Big Dan and the other two made those awkward slings look like string. Two on each side,

between the cab and the tracks. The bucket was pulled back close to the cab, lashed there for balance. Other slings were fastened there and over the counter weights.

SWEDE was everywhere, his low voice cutting through the harsh breathing of the others. Then voices clamored on the path and running feet sounded in the mud.

"Stop, you fools!"

Gordon was in the lead, the white-faced shovel runner just behind him. Other bulky figures crowded there in the dark.

Swede stepped forward to meet Gordon.

"No," his big voice boomed, "we take her over."

"You're crazy!"

"Our men in that tunnel." Swede's hand went out. "Big Dan's brother, my nephew. Our men."

While they talked the riggers finished their work and high on the hill the donkey whistle squalled. Ready! Somebody yelled. A man slipped, floundered in the mud and a raw voice barked:

"I'll stop the—"

Swede wheeled to face the voice, to face Longman's mud-plastered body as the super rose from beside the loading platform. The light glimmered on tool steel in his hand.

Swede didn't speak; instead, he moved away from his men and toward Longman. His big fists were slightly raised, his face set.

Longman threw the wrench straight at Swede's face.

There was no chance to duck. The heavy wrench caught Swede in the face. He stopped, swayed, and sagged to one knee. A stunned, awed silence while Swede's hands brushed at his face.

Three, dragging seconds and then the heavy voice split the silence and a blocky body flashed across the platform. It was Big Dan, I thought—no other man could move so fast.

Then, as a startled curse ripped the night, he was past Swede's bent figure and close to Longman. The super yelled as those big hands closed on his shoulders, snapped him close. He yelled again, a startled bleat of sound, as Big Dan's fist came up, and then was quiet.

Big Dan shouted something in his native tongue and sent Longman's limp body spinning across the platform. One of the riggers caught him, hung him across his shoulder like a sack, and climbed the shovel ladder.

The rest of them were moving now, charging through the mud, and Big Dan swung to meet them. The white-faced shovel runner was first, a good ten feet in the lead. His fist bounced off Big Dan's cheek and then the big man's hands went out. The shovel runner screamed. A thin, high wail of pure animal pain.

Big Dan swept him up, like a child lifts a doll, and threw him at the other men who swarmed over the platform. His flying body knocked three of them sprawling.

Big Dan gained a second while the rush re-formed, and he stepped back, fumbled at his feet. When he straightened, a five foot length of chain dangled in his hands.

"Come on." Raw cold words. His shoulders hunched and the chain cut the air. "Come on."

They stopped flat-footed. No one wanted to meet that chain, not with the strength of Big Dan's shoulders behind it. That metal, whip-like in his hands, would mash a man's skull the way a hammer splatters an egg.

Swede was on his feet again, moving up the trail to the donkey engine. His white head bent, then came savagely erect.

Big Dan gave orders: "Runt, go up on the signal platform. I keep these guys off. Nels, Ingwald, you ride the load."

Gordon choked, cursed: "You'll get ten years for this."

Big Dan said simply, "Longman rides the load. He runs the shovel after we get it over. The other man's no good."

Gordon shouted: "That's murder!"

Big Dan's voice cut like a knife. "My brother's in that pipe."

MAD, wild, unreasonable. That cable could never carry this load. Three men riding the shovel, three men out over the hole . . . Then suddenly the whistle squealed and I was clawing up the steep path after the slickered figure of Swede.

A giant hand seemed clamped around my throat, choking me. I knew I'd never breathe normally again.

The donkey platform was dark. Only the dancing glare of the fire lived in that black, rain-soaked night. Swede dropped his slicker, stepped over the worn plank to the controls. He was naked to the waist, unaware of the hissing rain that pelted his flesh, or of the crimson that seeped from the cut over his eye.

Then the squalling of the whistle.

The old man didn't speak. I doubt if he knew that I crouched behind him trying to hold the light steady so he could see the controls.

He didn't need that light. His hands knew those levers better than his eyes. He kicked off the main-line brake, moved a lever. The engine murmured behind him, hissed steam. Gently, slowly he picked up the slack. No whip-crack of movement this time. The big drum ticked over. The main-line snaked in through the blocks, like a black, endless snake. Then the squeal as the line came taut and the weight hit the cable.

He kept the drum turning while the shovel went skyward with the line. Forever, until the whistle squealed again and he locked the main-line brake. Then the dolly cable began to move and far below us the cluster of lights crawled out over the void. Sparks still streamed from the stack. They were keeping the fire up.

One light moved in a short, fast arc. Okay!

The donkey engine surged against the anchor cables. A slow turning block shrilled high above the clatter of the engine. Far below we could hear a shouted curse.

It was done now, eight lives at least, in Swede's big hands. Five men in the pipe, and three riding the load. If the slings gave—all hope was gone when that shovel rocketed down into the canyon. Swift death riding the falling load, and slow death in the tunnel.

Blind faith . . . Swede said it would go, so his crew rode the load.

Swede's white head was rigid, unmoving as the lights began to sway. Then one of the floodlights on the far side flicked around, etched the crawling shovel against the back drop of the night.

Unmeasurably far away, tiny, it was, like something on another world. Faint, clamoring voices rose questioningly. And then the donkey engine stopped!

Swede was swaying on the control deck. His big hand had left the throttle to wipe the blood out of his eyes. A sickening second, while the silence pounded my ears. Then he leaned forward, threw his weight hard against the lever, reached upward for the throttle.

God, how good that racketing chatter sounded! The lights moved, crawled, seemed to blend with the shouts from the other side.

"Paaaaweeeeeee."

Far away, nearly two thousand feet from where we stood. Swede set it down. His hands moved over familiar controls and the lights merged with scores of others on the platform on the far side. The bellowing voices sounded faintly like cheers when he locked the controls, took a single step backward, and picked up his slicker. Behind him the fireman was already blowing the boiler, drenching his fire.

AFTER that it was just work. Swede's riggers stripped the slings off the shovel, and Longman walked it into position. They got the men out, and it took twelve hours, even with the big bucket eating into the slide.

The high-line? Sure, it stayed. The welders had changed their minds before that night was over. Meade put it in words pretty well.

"If they can do that, they can make that rig stand up and talk. He can work over me any—" He left it like that, but the strike just dissolved.

Maybe you can call it a happy ending. We saw it from the office, when the reporters and camera men arrived from Pacific City. Swede wasn't there, so Longman posed for pictures with Big Dan and the two riggers who had ridden the load. The super did the talking.

"I didn't think the high-line would carry the shovel, but Swede's men convinced me." He was rubbing his jaw but no one grinned. "I wanted to take it around, but it wouldn't have got there. A shaft broke and locked the tracks just before we finished the slide. We'd have gone a half mile, an' then been stuck till the new one came from Seattle."

Then Swede appeared in the mess shack door and the camera man asked: "How's to get you and Swede together?"

Over the rising buzz of talk we could hear Longman's voice, sharp, clear. "Sure, but I didn't do much. The shovel had to get over before I could run it. He's the guy that saved their lives."

"How's for you guys to shake hands," the camera man asked, "and grin? You know, congratulate each other."

Swede and Longman shook hands and grinned. Ear-to-ear grins, that lasted long after the shutter clicked.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Brings you the first installment of a Georges Surdez serial of the Legion, "Nine Picked Men," about a desperate band who went "over the wall," to face greater perils, sterner danger in Spanish territory than the bullets of the *bicos* or the punishments of frontier discipline.

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"SOS SOS RAMMED DRIFTING DERELICT . . ."

DERELICT

by

JONATHAN ELDRIDGE AND HUGH B. CAVE

SEVEN bells. From habit, Bill Stillson reached for the key with his right hand, the starter button with his left, then remembered something and sat back soberly without touching either.

The smoldering cigarette in the porcelain dish (bought in Tocapilla for one American dime) lay neglected, as did his sister's letter and the matchstick darts on the operating table. The grimy deck of cards fanned out in a half-finished game of solitaire seemed somehow sacrilegious, because those cards bore prints of the same thin fingers which should now, but would never again, be batting out a message.

Seven bells. *"Blue Line schedule, Bill."* But there was no schedule to keep now, because Marty Andrews and the Blue Runner were gone. The sea alone knew their fate.

No schedule. But the call was there as always; the tenuous whine of Marty's old spark set rode with the wind's banshee howl at the ports. You *could* come back. So often Marty had done it, or half done it. So often Bill Stillson's phones had been on the last thin verge

of tightening to Marty's tell-tale touch.

He groped for the cigarette and sat back in his chair. The eyes that smiled at him from the photograph on the wall were somehow magnetic, holding him motionless when the room's eerie emptiness strove to expel him. They were a little boy's eyes in a little boy's body that contained the heart and soul and courage of a man. Marty Andrews—gone now, yet always returning, never really away.

Bill Stillson swiped aside message blanks, pencils and headphones and strode across the room. The door was hooked open. The fog that licked at his tired face as he veered along the passageway to the bridge deck was a wet, dank shroud smothering the ship, the shadow-shapes upon it, and the viscous black sea swelling beneath. He leaned at the rail and stared vacantly into it, breathing it into eyes, lungs and empty soul. It drove out memories and then mockingly it brought them back.

Brought back Marty Andrews, frail, sickly brass-pounder of the vanished *Blue Runner.* There'd been fog that night, too—fog as thick and strangling as the winding-sheet that enveloped the sea tonight. Pals, Bill and Marty, the one a key-thumper aboard the *Blue Belle* en route to South America out of New York, the other a radio operator of the sister freighter *Blue Runner,* bound north from Tocapilla.

Signals had been good that night. With the *Blue Belle* just southeast of Trinidad, you could hear the bell-clear tones from Tuckerton, the swinging drone of Chatham, the squeaky whistle from the naval station at Norfolk. You could hear your own heart mumbling, hear low-powered stations from both coasts booming in like tons of bricks. A night crystal clear for the message that was to be Marty Andrew's last.

"SOS SOS SOS DE KOVA KOVA SS BLUE RUNNER LAT 39.21 N LONG 72.36 W—"

No more. The "W" of Marty Andrews' plaintive call for help had moaned into oblivion like the diminishing howl of a siren. Then silence, cold and black and frightening.

No more. No more of anything. Straitjacketed by radio regulations, he had sat with leaden fingers aching to reach for the key before him. But you mustn't touch that key. Separated from the scene of disaster by hundreds of miles, you must remain silent while the SOS shrills its way through the ether to other ships close enough to render assistance. With your best friend hunched over those unseen instruments, his pale, slim fingers gripping the key with a touch so vividly familiar, you must sit and stare —and pray.

Even without the *Blue Runner's* call letters you know the crisp bugling howl of Marty Andrews' 500 cycle spark set. It is a tocsin—you know it as you'd know the voice of Marty himself, clear and soft as a plucked banjo string.

"SOS SS BLUE RUNNER . . . . . ." and you must not answer

You sit there staring, trembling, ears ringing with the numbing cacophony of uncountable signals from ships near and far.

The signals fade. A warning hiss tells you a tropical static storm is nearly over you. For a few breathless seconds you hear the bleating and screeching transmitters inquiring, "WHO SENT SOS?" and "WHAT IS WRONG WITH SS BLUE RUNNER?" And you sit there, powerless, helpless beneath the elements. In a few more minutes all is gone. Even the powerful groan from the ancient spark set at Trinidad fades to a hissing grit, almost lost in the rain of static. Another minute and it, too, fades. Nothing is left but the static.

Alone in a room ugly with shadows of impending tragedy, Bill Stillson had waited, not daring to open up for fear that the frantic questions eating at his heart might, if sent out, interfere with rescue work. No more until two bells,

when a single short news-flash had come in on the routine press.

"ITEM. NEW YORK JULY 8—AT NINE THIRTY P. M. LAST NIGHT THE BLUE LINE FREIGHTER SS BLUE RUNNER SENT A DISTRESS MESSAGE GIVING HIS POSITION AS LATITUDE 39.21 N AND LONGITUDE 72.36 W. MESSAGE WAS NOT COMPLETED OR REPEATED. THREE PASSENGER SHIPS ONE TANKER AND NUMEROUS COAST GUARD CUTTERS HAVE BEEN SEARCHING AROUND THIS POSITION BUT AS YET HAVE FAILED TO FIND ANY TRACE OF THE BLUE RUNNER OR ITS CREW."

No more. No more ever, except occasional lurid newspaper articles about the latest macabre mystery of the sea. There'd been the usual imaginative reports of a truant ship sighted on nights dark and dank; but darkness and fog were conducive to illusions and the long awaited howl of Marty Andrews' 500 cycle spark set—the slow, drawling swing of Marty's fist—had remained silent.

BILL STILLSON, staring into fog, drew cold air between his teeth and swung abruptly when a hand nudged his shoulder. A sailor had approached soundlessly.

"Third mate wants you on the bridge, Sparks."

The *Blue Belle's* third mate, big, husky, phlegmatic, was a mountainous black blob in the darkness of the wheelhouse.

"Please, Sparks," he boomed, "I want to put it in my log what ship is that passing. I think she is the *San Barton*. You find out for sure."

Bill stared a moment at the cluster of lights visible through the wheelhouse windows. Groping in the darkness, he found the heavy telegraph key in the box just beyond the door.

"WHAT SHIP IS THAT?" he blinked.

From her masthead the passing ship flashed a reply. "SS SAN BARTON WHAT SHIP IS THAT?"

"SS BLUE BELLE BON VOYAGE."

"THANKS THE SAME TO YOU."

Bill turned to the third mate. "It's the *San Barton*," he said. With cold fingers he stroked his scowling mouth. The *San Barton* was Anne's ship, wasn't it? Or had she and her new husband sailed on the *San Rafael*?

He returned to the radio shack and and looked again at Anne's letter, postmarked in New York and delivered to him weeks ago in Tocapilla. *"We're to be married Saturday, Bill—"* day before yesterday, that was— *"and will sail at midnight on the San Barton for Rio. Harry thinks we may pass your ship as you return from South America."*

So she and Harry were married now, and probably some of the tiny spots of light gleaming from the side of that passing ship came from the portholes of their bridal suite. A good egg, Harry, dependable and straight. He'd make Anne happy and they'd travel a bit. They'd have a nice home on Pelham Parkway; they'd have friends and children and get along fine.

But the wide, staring eyes in the photograph over Bill's desk seemed hurt, somehow. Seemed to know, and were infinitely sad. Squirming uncomfortably in his chair, Bill stared back into them and shook his head, frowning.

"It's best the way it is, Marty. You know that. Harry's an all-right guy. How could you expect to—well, Anne couldn't very well know you were in love with her when you never told her about it, could she? Why, when you and I were sailing all over this world on ships, she was just growing up. Maybe she would have been glad to know how you felt about her, Marty . . . . Why didn't you tell her? Scared to, I guess, huh? Afraid she wouldn't care to marry a sailor and be left alone at home while her husband roamed all over?"

No answer, of course. The eyes couldn't answer.

Marty would understand. Marty's love for Anne had been the only big thing in his life, but with nothing to offer her he had kept it to himself. Only Bill knew . . . .

Bill shook himself and glanced back at the letter. *"And will sail at midnight."* Turning, he flipped the toggle switch on the bench at his left. A whining hum came from the room outside, then a click, then another. The hum increased to a shrill ringing sound. He reached for the key and rapped out the call letters of the San Barton, signing his own.

"KFYU KFYU DE KDZL RQ."

Almost immediately the ripping squish of the San Barton's tube set blasted into his ears. "KDZL KFYU K."

"KFYU KDZL GOOD EVENING OLD MAN MY SISTER IS PASSENGER ABOARD YOUR SHIP WILL YOU PLEASE TAKE A NOTE FOR HER?"

"SURE GA." (GO AHEAD)

"THANKS NOTE MRS. HARRY CRAIG CONGRATULATIONS AND LOVE TO YOU BOTH PASSED YOU FEW MINUTES AGO BILL."

"OK QRX MIN WL GET QSL." (WAIT A MINUTE WILL GET REPLY)

Bill lit a cigarette and in a few minutes heard his call letters being punched out by the operator on the *San Barton* "KDZL KFYU BQ."

"KFYU KDZL K."

"HERE'S YOUR ANSWER OLD MAN—BILL STILLSON SS BLUE BELLE MANY THANKS HAVING WONDERFUL TIME LOVE FROM US BOTH ANNE AND HARRY."

The eyes on the wall seemed sadly to approve as Bill acknowledged the message with thanks, flipped the toggle switch and turned off the receiver.

HE hung up the phones and went on deck. The fog was thickening. Resounding blasts from the *Blue Belle's* whistle threatened at two-minute intervals to shred his eardrums. Nothing weird, nothing ghostly about that sound at close range; it was a wheezy bellow ripping the darkness, capable of murdering a man's nerves.

He walked forward along the slippery steel deck in an effort to escape the whistle's withering blast, and the fog went with him, soaking through his faded blue sweater. A voice and a shape came at him together. "That you, Sparks?"

"Yeah. Hello, Chief."

The chief engineer's weathered face gleamed pink and wet behind the glow of his pipe. He leaned on the rail, looked up at the funnel midships and wearily stretched his legs.

"Nasty night, Sparks," he grumbled. "The owners'll squawk plenty when they get the fuel bill for this trip."

Bill breathed fog. "Matter? She a hog?"

"She's a hog when that whistle's blowin'! Listen to it! Gar! Every time the third mate pulls that cord, she sucks another barrel of oil and she rips my head apart!"

Bill shrugged his big shoulders and gazed into darkness. Somewhere out there, perhaps ten miles distant by now, was the *San Barton,* with Anne and her husband aboard. Anne would be frightened tonight. Fog had always terrified her, perhaps because he himself had told her tales of tragic happenings under the fogs gray veil. Tales of collisions, wrecks, ghost ships drifting . . .

The third assistant engineer came through the mist and said, "Better come down below, Chief. Another gasket just gone to hell." The chief growled a hasty good night and strode away.

Bill Stillson stayed at the rail until a fine spray of rain blinded him; then, cold and shivering, he felt his way along the starboard side of the ship, pulled open the door of his own room and entered.

The room was a relief. Small, warm, it contained a bunk, a desk, and a battered trunk up-ended against one wall. You could escape from the fog here and

get away from sticky tentacles of dampness. You could scrub your wet face with a coarse towel and then stretch out with something to read.

The ship's clock clipped out two bells —nine P. M.—while Bill idly flipped the pages of a magazine. But reading was impossible tonight. That night eternities ago, when Marty's ship had vanished, had been a night like this.

He tossed the magazine aside and kicked it into a corner as he rolled off the bunk to pour himself a drink. It wasn't only the fog, the darkness, the night; something was wrong with Bill Stillson. Too much introspection, that was it. Too many gray memories.

The rain had become a vicious downpour, audible through the walls. It lashed the room's single port. And there'd been rain that night, too. He had run to the radio shack and—

The glass slid out of Bill's fingers. He stared at the door and realized that the ports in the radio shack were open again tonight; rain would be slanting in on sensitive instruments. Gripping the collar of his coat, he ran topside to the shack.

THE door was open as he had left it. Rain had puddled the floor beneath the open ports and wet the spark gaps. He closed the ports, removed the gaps from their rack in front of the panel, and with one leg hooked around a leg of the bench braced himself in the chair and reached for a cloth.

His left knee poked the loud-speaker plug into its jack under the table. He rubbed the spark gaps vigorously. A sudden hiss of squall static screamed out at him. Machine-gun volleys of sparks jumped across the plates of the antenna condenser, their crackle filling the room for many minutes before gradually fading to permit the passage of code.

The air was clear then, clear as fine wine. You could taste the ozone. You could hear Trinidad, San Francisco, Colon and New York booming in with equal intensity.

Routine stuff. Mustn't forget the time signals and weather from Arlington at 10 P. M. Mustn't forget to listen on the half-hour for naval storm warnings. Gaps to clean. Six messages to abstract. New ribbon on the mill here. And wind the clock.

The clock's hands stood at nine-twenty. Bill scratched a match under the table, lit his pipe and went back to the job of cleaning gaps.

The speaker rattled with the raucous tones of a Telefunken transmitter from a German freighter. "DEUT DEUT DE DOAC DOAC QTC ANTWORT F BIT." Some operator with traffic for Germany calling a sister ship and requesting a reply on wave F or 730 meters. And then an Italian ship asking all nearby ships of his nationality if they had anything for him, and telling them—as if they cared —that he had nothing for them. "IAAC IAAC DA IAOB QRU? NIENTE."

His mind was impervious to the blur of mesasges that followed. The air was full of signals, a heterogeneous miscellany from everywhere. Funny, there'd been the same sort of hash the night the *Blue Runner*—but Marty's call of SOS had silenced it.

Bong-bong-bong. Bill Stillson's gaze focused on the clock in front of him. Three bells. Marty's SOS had come through at three bells, too, and every letter of that message was still crystal clear in Bill's brain. "SOS SOS DE KOVA—"

He stiffened suddenly and looked at the speaker. His hands gripped the edge of the table. No, it couldn't be. He was hearing things.

He felt foolish.

"Must be going nuts," he mumbled. "Need sleep, I guess. This rain . . . fog . . ."

He *was* hearing things, of course. The memory of that other night had acquired

a voice and was plaguing him. Anne's marriage to Harry Craig had stirred up violent recollections of Marty, and because tonight was so like that ghastly night of months ago . . .

It came again, preceded by a growl of static as if the speaker were warningly clearing its throat. With din enough to shake the walls, it blared out: "SOS SOS SOS DE KFYU KFYU KFYU SS SAN BARTON LAT 39.48 N LONG 73.00 W RAMMED DRIFTING DERELICT TAKING WATER RAPIDLY MUST ABANDON SHIP REQUIRE IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE."

Bill Stillson typed it automatically without shifting his stare from the speaker. It didn't register, didn't reach into him, even though his mind mechanically transposed the screaming code into words and his fingers tapped the message out on the keys of the typewriter. He had to read the words themselves before believing.

The *San Barton!* Anne's ship! Good Lord—!

His big body shook from head to foot. His lips, white and tight, mumbled incoherently, "Marty! You're kidding, Marty . . . kidding me. You've come back . . ."

But it wasn't Marty That wasn't Marty's tell-tale, drawling fist. The sheet of yellow paper in the typewriter was real, and the message on it was vividly, hideously authentic, no ghostly prank from a phantom ship's operator.

The *San Barton* was sinking, and Anne was aboard her!

THE chair scraped backward on two legs and thudded against the wall as Bill tore paper from the typewriter. Got to get this to the old man! Got to —fast! The San Barton had been within arm's reach, almost, a short while ago. She'd still be close.

He ran to the bridge. "Call me if it gets thick" had been the captain's routine order for years, and it was plenty thick right now, rain whipping the wheelhouse windows, visibility almost nil. Bill almost ran into him as he stumbled in the darkness of the room.

"Steady, Sparks," he heard the skipper say. "What's up?"

Bill handed over the message without a word. The captain turned on a light in the chartroom. His leathery face darkened, eyes flashed as he read.

"About twenty miles astern of us," he said grimly, then rapped out: "Answer him, Sparks. Be there in about two hours."

Back in the radio shack, Bill jerked the chair to the table, flipped the toggle switch and waited impatiently for the generator to build up speed. Turning, he glanced at the transmitter. Only five gaps in. Need more power than that to cut through the static.

Fingers wet, he gripped the metal switch with his left hand, gave it one quarter turn and nervously tapped the key with his right. His head exploded. The shock was like a sledge-hammer blow between the eyes, hurling him across the room.

Dazed, he picked himself up, both arms numb, an ugly burn crimsoning his right palm. "Damn fool! Been in this business long enough to know better than that. Be committing suicide next thing."

He stumbled back to the table, again set the chair upright and slumped into it, his head ringing, eyes refusing to focus. The fingers of his injured hand gripped the key. Pain crept to every nerve-end as he rapped out: "KFYU KFYU DE KDZL AR."

Immediately he heard the screaming reply from the *San Barton.*

"KDZL KFYU K. (GO AHEAD)

"BE WITH YOU IN ABOUT TWO HOURS," Bill told him. "IS ANY OTHER SHIP NEARER?"

"NO OTHER SH—" The signals from the San Barton fluttered and died like a candle flame in a gust of wind.

"KFYU KDZL?" Bill queried anxiously.

No answer.

"KFYU KFYU KDZL ARE YOU THERE?" Bill rapped out, frowning.

Again no answer.

Bill sent blind. "KFYU KFYU KFYU DE KDZL KDZL KDZL PROCEEDING YOUR LAST POSITION ARRIVE ABOUT TWO HOURS."

Something had gone wrong in the *San Barton's* radio shack. Power had failed, probably, or Sparks had been ordered to leave the ship. The crash had been serious, then. Two hours might be too late.

He felt the *Blue Belle* wallow as she changed course. Bells clanged on the bridge. The speaking tube from bridge to radio room whistled, and Bill removed it from its hook. "Yes, sir?"

The captain's voice came firmly. "What does he say, Sparks? Can you tune him in on the direction finder?"

"He answered me, sir, but his transmitter broke down before he finished."

"See if you can get him again. It will save a lot of time if we can follow his beam."

Bill shook his head glumly at the tube.

"Afraid the way that transmitter stopped, his power is gone, sir." The pain in his burned hand was getting him; he shifted the tube to his left. "Wait a minute. I—I think I hear him!"

He dropped the tube and clamped the headphones over his ears. Have to forget the pain in that hand now. Something was coming through those phones!

"KDZL KFYU POWER FAILED OK NOW," he heard. "ABANDONING SHIP BUT WILL KEEP TRANSMITTER ON AIR FOR DIRECTION FINDER YOUR END. PLEASE HURRY SHIP SINKING FAST."

It was not the message, it was the fist sending it that slugged Bill Stillson between the eyes and straightened him against the broken back of the chair. He felt blood fading from his face, hairs rising from his tingling scalp. His eyes stayed wide, but their stare shifted from the receiver to the photograph above.

"Marty!" he whispered.

It *was* Marty! No operator in the world could imitate that fist. No transmitter but the one last operated by Marty had a note like that.

The grave had given up its ghost. Marty Andrews and his transmitter were on the *San Barton!*

Bill's hand leaped to the key. "MARTY," he spelled out, "IS IT YOU?"

"PLEASE HURRY TAKING WATER FAST WILL SEND MO FOR DIRECTION FINDER—MO MO MO MO MO MO MO MO . . . . ."

The dashes continued. Bewildered. Bill automatically reached for the speaking tube.

"You there, Captain?"

"What is it, Sparks?"

"Got him again now, sir. Be right up to tune him in."

He replaced the tube on its hook. The receiver droned an unceasing "MO MO MO MO MO MO" from Marty Andrews' inimitable fist—the fist of a man assumed months ago to be dead. Bill could not answer. Personalities had to be forgotten.

He hesitated a moment, then pulled the cord on the heavy antenna switch, grounding all his apparatus. The MO died behind him as he rushed up the stairway to the chartroom, where the captain was bending over a table, studying a map.

Anxiously Bill turned on the direction finder receiver, tuned it to six hundred meters and adjusted it to the San Barton's MO. It came clearly. Expertly he cut the volume down until the MO was a faint whisper, then reached overhead, grasped the loop wheel and turned it slowly, carefully, until the signal again became strong.

"Got it, sir," he told the captain.

The old man did not reply. With pencil and pad he wrote down the figures of the indicator beneath the loop, then

returned grimly to the table to make calculations.

Bill stood there. The MO continued droningly, mocking him—Marty's fist, Marty's antiquated spark set seeming so out of place on a modern luxury liner. Rain beat an endless accompaniment against the chartroom windows. The captain's breathing was a harsh, asthmatic wheeze.

"Got a cigarette, Sparks?" Obviously that was an attempt to remain calm in the face of frightening uncertainty. The fingers that took the cigarette shook a little, and the old man's face was haggard with anxiety. At two-minute intervals the fog whistle blared its lurid warning into the night, savagely twisting Bill's nerves.

He sat on the stairway railing, phones glued to his ears while he listened to the monotonous "MO MO MO MO MO MO." An occasional "QRT SOS" came from some ship out there in the fog as its helpful operator endeavored to silence other ships but succeeded only in adding to the interference.

A naval shore station blared out a storm warning in blissful ignorance of the existing emergency. But gradually the disturbance disappeared, the air became weirdly quiet, punctured only by Marty Andrews' undying "MO MO MO MO MO . . . . . "

AN hour of that. An hour of listening and wondering. Then half an hour of nerve-wracking silence.

No need for the direction finder now. Within a few minutes the Blue Belle should reach the scene of disaster. Bill hung up the phones and turned wearily to the skipper. "Apparently his power's gone again, Captain. I'll go back to the shack." The captain nodded.

Bill returned to the radio room, pulled the antenna cord back into working position and sat there. Funny, this business of Marty Andrews' being on the *San Barton*, especially with Anne and her husband there too. Had Marty done that deliberately, after hiding away for months?

You could reason that out, of course, but what of the transmitter? The *San Barton* was a new ship, equipped with modern tube apparatus. Queer, the whole business. But there'd be an answer presently, when the Blue Belle reached the end of its forced-draft race with time. Marty himself could answer—

The room's stillness was disturbed suddenly by a weak staccato fizz from the receiver. Bill strained to catch the scratchy characters, stiffened and held his breath.

The *San Barton* again!

"KDZL KFYU CAN SEE YOUR LIGHTS NOW WITHIN HALF MILE OF US CHANGE YOUR COURSE A LITTLE EAST WATCH OUT FOR LIFEBOATS STANDING CLOSE BY. THIS IS 30 (FINAL TRANSMISSION) AND GOOD-BY."

And—good-by? Heart thumping, Bill feverishly started his transmitter and streaked out, "OK MARTY FB CUL." (FINE BUSINESS. SEE YOU LATER.) Then he sat back, anxiously awaiting a reply.

It came at last, faintly, tenuously, like the whisper of a dying breeze. Almost inaudible. Almost not there at all. "PLEASE. . . . . BILL . . . . REMEMBER . . . . ME . . . . TO . . . . ANNE."

Somehow Bill knew that was the end, knew that his own inability to press the key was not caused solely by the pain of his scorched hand. Marty was gone now. There'd be no more. The echoes of that last "Remember me to Anne" seemed to linger a while in the room's strained silence, and then were smothered by the night outside.

He turned in his chair and listened to the clanking of heavy chains, the buzzing of a windlass, the thudding of rope ladders against the side of the ship. Sharp voices issued commands as lifeboats were lowered.

He went on deck, stood mutely with

unlighted cigarette between his lips and watched while men scurried about like drenched rats. Searchlights bored through the fog and rain, illuminating patches of the ugly, heaving waste on all sides. Somewhere out there, in one of the crowded boats bobbing on the inky surface, was Anne.

He could make out the huge bulk of the *San Barton* low in the water, her nose buried deep in the bowels of a half submerged derelict. It would be over soon. At any moment the big liner would shudder and submerge, dragging the derelict with her.

Bill strained to get a better look at the derelict. She was long, low and ugly, uncannily similar to the ship on whose deck he was standing. Now and then the beam of a searchlight swept across her bow but failed to reveal her name.

"Old man wants you, Sparks."

He turned. The speaker was already a receding shape in the darkness. On the bridge the captain handed him a sheet of paper and said curtly. "Send this to the office. Stand by for an answer."

Once more Bill Stillson sat at the table in the radio shack, this time punching out slowly: "BLUELIN NEW YORK—CHANGED COURSE 9:35 PM ANSWERING DISTRESS SS SAN BARTON NOW STANDING BY PICKING UP SURVIVORS ARRIVED SCENE 11:24 PM MORE LATER—MASTER BLUE BELLE."

He leaned back after the OK flashed from Chatham, then reached for a blank and rolled it in the typewriter. For the next twenty minutes he was busy copying messages from the press associations, queries from anxious friends and relatives of the San Barton's passengers, and answering numerous questions from the Coast Guard.

THE *San Barton's* operators, drenched and shivering, had been taken aboard. Two of them came to the shack to offer assistance. Bill knew them both by name, got up and shook hands with them.

"Where's the third?" he asked quietly.

"Hurt trying to string up an emergency antenna," the chief mumbled. "Name's Benny Lang—you know him, don't you? I was afraid you hadn't got us, Stillson. Antenna came down while I was trying to answer you and we were ordered to abandon ship about five minutes later. Just got out that one SOS."

Bill Stillson heard none of the receiver's furious din calling him back to duty. He stared at the San Barton's chief, licked his lips and said almost inaudibly, "Just that—one—SOS was all you sent?"

"Well, I got in a couple of words before the antenna came down, but—"

The skipper, red-eyed and exhausted, entered on heavy feet.

"You fellows better change into dry clothes," he said. Then, to Bill: "Came to tell you your sister's safe, Sparks. She and her husband are resting in your room." He shivered violently as a trickle of water from his cap ran down the back of his neck. "*San Barton* just went down. Ugly mess. Two passengers and four crew missing, and some of the others badly shaken up."

He stopped suddenly and turned a quizzical gaze on Bill's sober face. "That derelict was the *Blue Runner*, Sparks, sister to this wagon. Didn't you have a friend on there when she disappeared?"

Bill inclined his head slowly. "Yes, I had a friend on there. Marty Andrews."

The captain opened his mouth to speak, then, apparently sensing something, closed it again and walked out. Bill Stillson was looking at the photograph on the wall.

The eyes were the same strange, sad eyes, but somehow even in their sadness they seemed now to be smiling. For a moment Bill sat as if hypnotized. Then he whispered, "Okay, Marty . . . . thanks!"

A large panther, peering down at him . . .

PANTHERS OF THE COAST

by C. F. SCHOONOVER

AN ARTICLE by William Wells, in an old issue of Adventure, came to the attention of a group of hunters here in Oregon, and they gathered data to dispute Wells' contention that panthers, or cougars, do not scream; can't smell; never lie in wait for prey; and have never attained the length of nine feet or over.

The argument is old, but it still goes on. I hope to be able to convince your readers that although Wells may have hunted mountain lions for twenty years, yet he had not learned all there was to know about these huge cats.

The only explanation I can offer for the diversity of opinion we get from panther hunters is that these men are writing from widely separated localities. Wild animals adapt themselves quite a bit to their environment. Even domesticated animals alter their habits. Take a horse who is used to flood lands, for instance. It will think nothing of swimming across a slough to save steps, whereas a desert-bred horse can hardly be brought to take to water at all. I know of an old cow belonging to a lighthouse keeper who had to send his family to shore for schooling, although they all returned to their home on the lighthouse for week-ends. There was about an acre of rocky soil around the lighthouse, so the keeper kept this cow weekends, but the animal went to and fro from the home on the island to the cottage on shore regularly with the children. Although there was about a mile of open water between the lighthouse and the shore, the cow was ready to walk into the water for her weekly swim as soon as the rope was on her horns and the rowboat pulled off.

It was a comical sight to see that old cow plowing along behind the boat every week-end. She seemed to look forward to the experience, and her owner was in constant fear she might attempt the trip alone. But just try to get the ordinary old bossy to take a swim and you will find she feels out of her element.

So with wild animals. If a panther lives in a wild country of open ranges and rocky ledges with only patches of timber, he will develop habits of the chase entirely different from those of the animal which haunts the dense brush

and tall timber of the Pacific Coast.

There would be no way for a cougar to see game at a distance and make for it in several twenty-foot jumps, as Mr. Wells describes, in a section where the runways of game are along dark paths through the thick stems and branches of overhanging boughs and bush. The logical way for a climbing animal to pounce on its prey would be for it to lie in wait overhead and jump down.

I happen to know personally that two panthers once watched me pass below them as they watched from an overhead ledge at Shawnigan Lake, B. C. The fact that a neighbor was driving an empty wagon towards me at the time probably saved my life. My sister and I were driving through what we called the "swamp road," a dreary, dark, cross-road through thick timber. Just at dusk our horse took fright and became unmanageable. He ran away with us, and our two wheeled little vehicle jumped and bounced along pretty rapidly for about a mile. We passed the neighbor in a cloud of dust.

Next day he explained to us why the horse was in such a hurry. "There were two panthers looking at you over that big rock at the corner as you turned off the swamp road," he said, "and the way they were crouched, it looked as if they would have had you or the horse if I hadn't distracted their attention."

This man was accustomed to cougars and was a good hunter, so I never doubted his word; especially as the horse we had been driving could not be induced to run under ordinary persuasion, being too old and fat. But he showed plenty of speed that time.

A FEW miles from that place, near Cobble Hill, B. C., two children were attacked by one of these huge animals as they were on a lonely stretch of road going home from school. The girl was about eight years old and the boy a year or so older. They fought off the brute with their lunch pails until help arrived. This happened about fourteen years ago and the residents of Cobble Hill know the story well. Newspapers all copied it at the time.

In Nehalem County, Oregon, about twenty years ago (the time is not essential) a boatload of school children were rowing down the North Forks of the Nehalem River when a panther leaped for their boat from an overhanging limb. Fortunately he missed the boat by a few inches, his claws raking the stern as he frantically grabbed for a foothold, or there would not have been many left to tell the tale. Few of the children could swim, and a fierce animal of that sort amongst the youngsters would have meant an upset boat and mangled bodies in the melee.

An old hunter who was raised in Nehalem, and who had quite a lot of experience with the big cats, agrees that they are very cowardly and will get away from a person as fast as they can if the human is erect and facing them. He had the habit of ranging the woods without camping equipment or even a blanket for nights, so he was accustomed to crawl under a log when darkness came on, and build a fire at the entrance of his crude shelter.

He states that one morning he awoke suddenly to see a large panther peering down at him as a cat would a mouse. The animal acted as if his victim were cornered, and would not go away until he threw firebrands at it. It did not act afraid and to all appearances would have grabbed him if he had not awakened sooner.

As for screaming, a resident here tells me she was camping out picking wild blackberries about fourteen years ago in this same district.

On this day she and her sister heard a loud call sounding through the bush. She said: "That is dad calling us and he sure sounds mad. Let's hurry and fill our buckets so he won't get after us too much."

So the girls hallooed back and immediately that terrible yell sounded, but nearer this time. The eldest girl took fright and cried: "Run quick. Something awful has happened. I never heard dad scream like that before."

So the girls grabbed their buckets and ran for the camp, where they met their father searching for them.

"Did you hear that noise?" he asked. And his face looked so worried that the girls thought they had done something.

"Yes, but we answered you, and came as fast as we could," they replied.

"Children, that was not me calling you. I heard it the first time and came out to bring you home, but I did not call for fear of drawing the animal closer. That was a cougar screaming. I know that sound well. Stay close to camp from now on."

Her father told me about the panthers he had killed or trapped and years afterwards I had occasion to visit the district he spoke about.

I WAS most interested in this old man's tale of how a panther's scream brought him out of his house when he was living in Humbolt County, California over fifty years ago. He said that one night he thought he heard a call for help coming from the woods, and as it was a very dark night and a person could easily get off the old wagon trail at that place, he lit his lantern and set out to the rescue. He would call out that he was coming, and what he took to be a woman's voice would answer in a scream of terror. It came nearer as he traveled on, until suddenly the scream startled him by its proximity and its volume.

He says that it was near enough for him to hear a horrible grating undertone that was unnoticeable at a distance, but terrifying at close range.

He realized that he had been attracting a cougar by his calls, and he set out for home mentally praying that his only weapon, the lantern, would not go out on him, for the baffled brute followed him right to the path to his doorstep before it left, screaming at intervals all the way. He told me that the fear of being followed that one gets on a dark night is nothing to the feeling which overwhelms a man when there really is a large brute stalking behind, throwing in a few blood-curdling screams now and again for good measure.

The contention that it may have been a coyote or wolf doing the screaming at such times as these is a foolish one to my mind. I am familiar with coyotes and wolves, and I can't understand how anyone could confuse such a bark and howl as they give, with the scream of a cat animal.

Up on Vancouver Island, B. C., I once heard a bunch of coons fight and screech all night. But if the wailing yowl of an ordinary tomcat can't be distinguished from all such wild animal sounds, then the listener has poor ears. The mating call of a mountain lion, panther, cougar—call it what you will—must be a terrible scream if it is at any way similar to a cat's.

I have made careful inquiries from different coast hunters who are familiar with cougars. Not all of them had heard these animals cry out, but all had met men who had. Those I spoke to who did know personally what the scream of a panther sounds like, and who had listened to it themselves, maintain that it is easily distinguishable from the cry of any other wild animal, and once heard cannot be forgotten.

As to length of the animals, there was one shot here in Nehalem, Oregon, last fall which was over nine feet in length, and I was examining a female which the hunters brought in a few months ago shot near Onion Peak here, and it was close to eight feet long. It may be that the lions of Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and the mountain states are under eight feet in length, but it is a fact that they frequently exceed nine feet along the Coast.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

THAT account by A. S. H. of himself and *Adventure* founding the earlier American Legion brings us this excellent letter from Colonel W. A. Graham, Judge Advocate, U. S. Army, which I think contains matter new to all of us—the commander of the "earliest" American Legion was Benedict Arnold, and the legion was fighting Americans.

I wonder whether you care to hear from an ancient Camp-Fire correspondent—one who hasn't "spoken out in meeting" for the past ten years or so, but who a decade ago and during several years before, was frequently in your columns during the editorial reign of A. S. H.

I have read every issue of *Adventure* since the beginning of its career (except during my service in France) and have *nearly* always found it worth while; and particularly so, the "Camp-Fire," which, like other old-timers, I always read first.

I have just finished reading A.S.H.'s interesting account of *Adventure's* American Legion. I remember it well as a gesture which did much to focus the attention of the country to its state of utter unpreparedness against war at a time when the world was beginning to blaze; and I read with interest also, what A.S.H. and the inquiring correspondent whose letter he answered, had to say about the origin of the name and its adoption by the present American Legion.

It so happens that I was a delegate to the convention at Paris during March of 1919, when the American Legion was formed by veterans of the World War; and I recall very distinctly the debate that took place over the matter of naming the organization. Rather, I should say that I recall that such a debate occurred, and a rather sharp one,—though my recollection of what was said and who said it is dimmed by the eighteen years that have elapsed since then.

The Paris Convention was called to order by Major Eric Fisher Wood of my Division—the 88th, as temporary chairman. Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who had been slated to act as temporary chairman, had already returned to America, and was, therefore, not present. Whether any suggestion of his influenced proposal of the name as finally adopted, I do not know: perhaps the member of the Committee on Names who proposed it could answer the question. The Committees on which I served,—Permanent Organization and the Special Committee appointed to elaborate upon the combined reports of the Permanent Organization and Conventions Committees, had nothing to do with the selection of a name for the organization.

The "Stars & Stripes" for Friday, March 21, 1919, however, had this to say about the adoption of the name "American Legion"—

The selection of a name was the last matter taken up by the caucus and was acted upon just prior to adjournment Monday afternoon.

The Committee on Names had prepared a list containing names which ranged from the prosaic Army of the Great War to the more flowery American Crusaders. A vote had been taken in the Committee and the five favorites in their proper order had been: Legion of the Great War, Veterans of the Great War, The Legion Society of the Great War, and the American Legion."

In the same issue of the "Stars & Stripes," among its notes under the head-line "Launching the American Legion," it was stated:

That the word "legion" in the American Legion "smacked slightly of the silk stocking" was an objection raised by a Sergeant in the Medical Department during the discussion on names. The word quickly found a defender in a colonel from the First Division who said that his men had never felt more honored than when they were fighting shoulder to shoulder with the men of the French Foreign Legon. A quietus was put on the discussion when a delegate mentioned that he personally had no grievance against a silk stocking or even a pair of them.

Captain Joseph Mills Hanson of G. H. Q. wanted to adopt the name American Legion of the Great War, the letters A. L. G. W. comprising the initials of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. One of the members of the Committee had waxed poetic enough to demand American Crusaders.

During the debate on names, I vaguely recall that one delegate who spoke from the gallery,—it was, I think, Captain Ogden Mills of New York—called to the Convention's attention that there was already an incorporated organization in existence called the American Legion; whereupon some other delegate replied that the organization referred to was never active and he understood that it was not now a going concern. At any rate, I am sure that *Adventure's* American Legion was discussed on the floor of the Convention during the debate on names.

Now, as to the origin of the name. A. S. H. quotes Mr. Vawter as having written in 1927, that the first organization to bear the name was a fraternal society of 1878, called the American Legion of Honor, which went out of existence "in its twenties." That may have been the first American Legion of the nineteenth century, but it was certainly *not* the first organization to bear the name.

The earliest "American Legion" of which I have found a record dates back to the year 1780. It was raised, organized, and commanded by Benedict Arnold, shortly after his treason and his appointment as a Brigadier General in the British Army, being one of the two corps which Arnold was authorized by Sir Henry Clinton, the British Commander in Chief, to raise from American loyalists or "Tories." The American Legion organized by Arnold was, I believe, a cavalry command, and two of hs sons, Henry and Richard, were commissioned lieutenants of cavalry in this organization. (See Sabine, American Loyalists of the American Revolution, Vol. 1, p. 183, Little Brown & Co., 1864) Arnold's American Legion is listed among the many Loyalist or "Tory" organizations which fought on the side of King George during the American Revolution. (See Sabine, Vol. 1, Ch. VII, p. 73, Note 1); and this American Legion was one of the organizations of the British Army that took part, under Arnold's command, in his operations in Virginia and Connecticut during 1781, as shown by his official reports to Sir Henry Clinton. These reports are set forth in full in Isaac N. Arnold's work—"The Life of Benedict Arnold," at pages 344 to 352 inclusive.

In the first of these reports, dated "Petersburgh, May 16, 1781," General Arnold stated, *inter alia*:

"On the 18th of April the light infantry, part of the 76th and 80th regiments, the Queen's Rangers, Yagers, *and American Legion*, embarked at Portsmouth * * *"

* * *

"The same day I marched to Osborns with the 76th and 80th Regiments, Queen's Rangers, part of the Yagers, *and American Legion*, where we arrived about noon * * *"

Arnold's report of September 3, 1781, is dated at "Sound off Plumb Island," and contains an account of his operation against New London and Forts Trumbull and Griswold, at the latter of which the American garrison, under Ledyard, were put to the bayonet by the assaulting British under Bromfield. The report states—

"* * * At ten o'clock, the troops in two divisions, and in four debarkations, were landed: one on each side the harbour, about three miles from New London; that on the Groton side, consisting of the 40th and 54th regiments, and the 3rd battalion of New Jersey Volunteers, with a detachment of Yagers and artillery, were under the command of Lieut. Col. Eyre. The division on the New London side consisted of the 38th Regiment, the Loyal Americans, *the American Legion*, Refugees, and a detachment of sixty Yagers, who were immediately on landing put in motion: and at eleven o'clock, being within a half mile of Fort Trumbull, which commands New London harbour, I detached Captain Millet with four companies of the 38th regiment to attack the fort, who was joined on his march by Captain Frink with one company of *the American Legion*. * * *"

I am not prepared to say that this cavalry organization, composed of American "Tories," raised for Sir Henry Clinton by Benedict Arnold after the latter's defection from the American cause in 1780, was the first to bear the name "the American Legion," but I think it probable; and recalling, as I do, the patri-

otic fervor that pervaded the Paris Convention of March, 1919, I have speculated often, since I "discovered" (during the course of an historical study last year) the record of this Tory outfit, "the American Legion" of 1780, whether the delegates to that 1919 Convention in Paris would have adopted the name for the organization they were engaged in launching, had they known about this phase of the name's history.

JOINING our Writers' Brigade in this issue, John Hawkins, author and man who's been around, gives us this account of himself:

Construction runs in the family. I saw my first job at the uncurious age of twenty-one days, when my father took over his first residency on the C. P. R.

Things were different then. I've heard the stories about that job, and others, a hundred times. The sliding bluff was on that section, and one tunnel. The smoke cleared away from the last tunnel shot and they had to build a bridge. A fault in the rock took the whole point out into the river.

I grew up in camps, and went to whatever school was closest. There was little appeal there, though. The teachers didn't know a fish-plate from a shoo-fly, and they wouldn't have recognized a cat if they'd met it face-to-face.

My first job, one vacation, was rear chaining on a location party. The instrument man on that crew could have walked the hind legs off of a mountain goat—and what he did to me! Anyway, I'd read too many magazines, and listened to too many bunk house yarns. Came the first payday and I cashed my check and started toward salt water. One of Dad's friends brought me back and another survey party handed me an ax.

Time brought proficiency, but it wasn't until I was seventeen that I got enough head-start. I picked a tramp steamer and told the old chief engineer that I was twenty-two. He listened with a straight face (and signed me at ten dollars under scale). That trip took in China, Japan and the Islands.

Back home and another survey job. Then school again until a frazzled principal decided that, as far as he was concerned, my education was complete.

Summers were divided between ships and surveys. Some twenty or thirty countries obligingly sailed past my port hole. Then, upon the discovery that bunkhouses at least remain where you leave them, and don't, without notice, leave for Panama with your other shirt, I went back to construction.

Bridges, Dams, Highways, Tunnels, Jetties, Pipe Jobs. I've worked on them all, either as a member of the survey party (and the bull-necks will rise to say that isn't work) as an inspector, or a timekeeper. And on a couple of proud occasions I was turned loose with an instrument.

These are my people, and I know them. The bull-necks, the fallers, the powder men, the riggers, the steel men. Construction hands. A gusty bunch, who drift from job to job. They make good money, or did, and spend it.

There's nothing sure about construction. Winter shuts the jobs down. Spring brings lean-bellied men out of the rooming houses and cheap hotels. They never seem to remember, and when the job is done they have a time while the money lasts.

There's a wealth of material here, rich material. I've listened to a thousand bunkhouse tales, heard others in the cab of a truck or a locomotive. I've watched the bridge men, and walked the beams myself with an inspector's hammer. I've kept time on a tunnel job where seven of the hard rock men, on an eight man shift, had the same name. I've ridden the rock trains, and walked into a blast. That turns your legs to water, and you squat cowering, while the rock rains out of the sky.

Jetties, and there's my idea of the toughest way in the world to earn your cakes. Out there where Old Lady Ocean takes a hand, and the job's never done.

Sand-hogging I missed. High air and the working end of a Finn Banjo didn't appeal to me.

I like construction stories, like to write them. There's too much keel dust in my hair yet, and possibly I'll do a better job as time takes me further away from construction and I put them in language that everyone can understand.

JUST in case some comrades should raise doubting eyebrows about the amount of punishment that was handed out in older days of military discipline, or any other matter pertaining to "Dan'l Morgan's Stripes," H. Bedford-Jones makes these remarks of his own to beat you to it.

Boys, we're not writing historic fact; go easy on the critical sense, and read the story as a story. Get your facts out of the encyclopaedia.

This Dan'l Morgan was a tough guy—drinker, wrestler, roisterer, crack shot. Born

in Jersey and went west to Virginia. There's the legend of his wound coming in the Braddock fracas; maybe it came elsewhere. No matter. I've used the legend.

The 500 lashes is no exaggeration. Some of these soldiers took 1000 lashes and a drumming-out besides. I have the courtmartial records if you doubt it. The Scotch Irish regulars in Braddock's grenadiers were one hard, tough lot.

The colonists were loyal at this time, remember; no animus against the king. Just the usual civilian feeling toward overbearing soldiery, and the independence of the American frontiersman, which I've tried to express in Morgan.

TO explain the collaboration on "Derelict," Hugh B. Cave writes us:

Eldridge being somewhere between here and Greece, key-pounding on the S. S. Exhibitor, I suppose it's up to me to introduce him and take the consequences. You saw his name around at the time of the Akron disaster, for sticking to his post on a night when most of us were seeking cyclone cellars. A radio man to the tips of his fingers, he has seen service at Chatham, Southampton, and on ships enough to choke the Panama Canal. Writes, in his spare time, adventure and sea and radio stories, and is a nut about fishing.

"Derelict" came into being one night in a Cape Cod fishing camp. We were discussing the peculiar ability of some radio men to identify the key-touch or "fist" of a sender as readily as most men would identify a speaker's voice.

There's a rather interesting yarn about a chap who late one night heard the fist of a buddy who had been reported drowned several years before. The operator, sure of that fist, investigated and discovered his pal not only 'ale and 'earty, but working on a sister ship of the same line! Under an alias!

"Derelict" came out of that.

As for me, I'm thin, tall, and thirty, and began writing fiction about eight years ago. Have sold a lot of it, all things considered, but this is my first story to *Adventure*. Hope it won't be the last.

CURTIS WARD, of Oklahoma City, sends this appeal to our readers. We can't make a practice of printing such requests, because we have no way of investigating them thoroughly, but surely this case is an exception. What about it, comrades? I'll write. Will you?

How many *Adventure* comrades remember Bill Tilghman, that old-timer of whom William MacLeod Raine said: "From some points of view William Tilghman was the greatest peace officer the West ever had."

Wild Bill Hickok was shot in a private quarrel, Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson died peacefully in bed, but Bill Tilghman, with a longer period of public service than any of them (fifty years an officer with thirty-five years active service) was the only one of the group to make the last great sacrifice for the law.

While serving as a peace officer he was shot down by a federal prohibition officer who was driving about the streets with two women dive-keepers and another man—all of them drinking and cursing. The federal officer got out of the car and fired his gun. Tilghman came up, seized the officer's wrist and took his gun. As Tilghman released the wrist the prohibition officer drew another gun and shot the old-timer, killing him instantly. The killing later was characterized by the trial judge as a deliberate assassination.

Adventure had an interest in Bill Tilghman, as he had just accepted a position as *Ask Adventure* expert on frontier days and buffalo hunting.

It is twelve years since Bill Tilghman laid down his life for the law. There has been a bill in Congress for ten years to pay his widow $5,000 for the loss she sustained through the act of a drunken federal officer. During that time a similar bill has been voted and the money paid to the widow of Henry Wirkula, who was killed by federal officers while *running* from them. The House has twice voted the bill for Mrs. Tilghman, but it has each time died with adjournment.

Are you readers of *Adventure* interested in this case sufficiently to write letters to your Congressmen and U. S. Senators in behalf of this just and meritorious bill which again is before Congress? If so, write at once that Mrs. Tilghman may get action at this session of Congress.

AT LUNCH recently with an officer of the Salt Water Anglers of America, a man intensely interested and active in all forms of wild life conservation, this story came up.

A banquet was held by one of the

powerful organizations seeking ways to help depleted species of game. It was in one of New York's biggest ballrooms, and prominent speakers were there with motion pictures.

One of the speakers was a "wealthy sportsman" with a game refuge in Virginia or the Carolinas. I quote "wealthy sportsman" because newspapers always put these two words together automatically, and sometimes you wonder why. But newspapers all play the game of making the people they speak about seem more important, so that the news about them will seem important. They can't, or don't, say John Jay, who has a lot of money, or John Jay, rich man, or John Jay (he has what it takes) because somehow it doesn't sound dignified. So they discover if John Jay ever shot a duck or caught a bass or sat on a horse, and then the problem is solved with everybody happy, because he's a wealthy sportsman. Sometimes these fellows are sportsmen too, and good ones, but sometimes the newspapers call their shots wrong.

The speaker told how, on his game refuge, hundreds of acres were seeded to wheat and thousands of Canada geese fed there in safety all winter. The geese became friendly and grateful, and showed their appreciation of the haven in various ways, short of coming up to thank him personally in the spring before leaving for the north. One regrettable incident had occurred, however. He had discovered one goose injured or crippled. It got no better, and finally he was forced to shoot it.

The hundreds of conservationists applauded, the speaker beamed and gave the signal for the motion picture of his game refuge.

The banquet hall went dark, the pictures began to move on the screen. A flock of geese flew past the camera. Some of these geese stopped suddenly in their flight, pinwheeled strangely, and crashed to the ground. Another scene—more geese flew, and some of these also were stricken by the same unknown disease in mid-air. They flew from north, from south, east and west; they flew a number of times past a certain clump of willows by a certain little creek; and always a percentage of them succumbed to the invisible death rays. Then two colored boys drove a truck out into the wheat field, and loaded the truck with the dead geese.

The lights went on. The speaker was red and looked very crumpled; he looked as if he had been flying in one of the flocks of geese, and the colored boys had just loaded him into the truck. But he exclaimed that he didn't know where that film had come from; those pictures were not of his place, somebody had set out to embarrass him or something.

So another film was shown. The geese flew into the wheatfield and ate. They flew over a certain clump of willows by a certain little creek. They flew and fed, and not a goose died.

The meeting ended with many cynics. Only one man seemed to have complete faith in the game refuge. Only one man pointed out that the *only* field of wheat, the *only* willows and the *only* creek, were not on the refuge. Why, there were lots of those things in lots of places, said the wealthy sportsman.

H. B.

There are now thirty-odd magazines on news-stands made up of reprint stories. These magazines give no sign that their stories are second hand: that readers have read them in other magazines a few years ago.

Presenting old stories in the guise of new ones is a policy of certain publishers.

The reason is—*used* stories in the reprint market can be bought by publishers for one-tenth to one-fifteenth of the price that *Adventure*, for example, pays for *new* stories.

All stories in *Adventure* and all other magazines issued by Popular Publications are *new* stories.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

LISTENING in on the talk of ships at sea.

Request:—Some years ago I fooled around with radio—I had a commercial license—but that was in the days of the peanut tube.

At the present time, I am a broadcast listener. But recently I was struck with the idea that a simple one-tube set that would pick up commercial ship traffic might afford me considerable amusement.

What I would like to build is a simple one-tube set, for use with headphones, that will operate on the commercial bands. If dry cell tubes are still available, I presume they would be the most satisfactory to use.

I would want it small, compact, and portable so that I could use the set on my desk. I have always had a hankering to copy code on my typewriter, and never had an opportunity to try it.

What are your suggestions?

—David T. Davies, Hollywood, Calif.

Reply by Mr. D. Mc Nicol:—Knowing the code you should be able to pick up much of interest from no end of stations, amateur and commercial. The boys use many short cuts, and only one in ten uses much sense in transmitting, but you should soon be able to get enough of it to make it understandable.

Broadcast and short-wave receivers are different breeds. You can buy a one-tube, battery operated broadcast receiver for $4.10 from Federated Purchaser, Inc., 1331 So. Michigan Ave., Chicago. As to a short-wave outfit, a one-tuber would not give you satisfaction. Two tubes at least are required. I inclose diagram and description of a good outfit. You can use batteries for 'B' power, but inasmuch as heater type detector tube is preferable you could use 110 a.c., house current for filaments. This would require a small transformer and filter condensers with two and one-half volt output, which you could procure from any radio service man.

It is a bit of a job to make a s-w receiver. You will require the sympathetic cooperation of a genial radio service man.

A FORT to protect fishermen— Fort York, Newfoundland.

Request:—I have attempted to trace the location of Fort Chateau, Labrador, through the usual channels, but without success. I believe that it was located in what is now known as Chateau Bay, just off the Belle Isle. The fort was occupied in 1771, but I have no knowledge of the length of the occupation.

I am anxious to be put in touch with some person who can supply me with a photograph of the fort, or village, if one is in existence at the present time.

—L. R. Richardson, Montreal, Can.

Reply by Mr. C. T. James:—The fort at *Chateau Bay*, Strait of Belle Isle, was begun under order of Governor Sir Hugh Palliser in 1764 and completed in 1767. Its location was at a place called Pitt Harbour, and in consequence it has sometimes been erroneously styled by several Newfoundland historians and writers as Fort Pitt. Fort York was the correct name.

This fort was for the protection of British fishermen from the encroachments and attacks of the French, and in this respect it proved of value for a few years. In 1775, Admiral Duff, Governor, wrote to Carleton, Governor of Quebec, that the garrison at Fort York was of no material benefit to the residents of Chateau Bay, and he had given orders for the troops to be withdrawn, the fort dismantled and the guns, stores, etc., brought to St. John's.

In 1786, Captain Grimes of the U. S. privateer *Minerva* and later an American naval

officer named Richiey (?) claimed to have captured the fort, but obviously it was a barren victory, the place not having been used for either offense or defense since its evacuation in 1775. Some historians make it 1778. Grimes did take three Newfoundland fishing schooners, but there was little left of the fort but its walls. Due to neglect and weather action these have now crumbled away, and today an archaeologist might by dint of effort, locate the outlines and perhaps a portion of the bastions. Otherwise there is little left to denote that Fort York was ever a military post.

A letter addressed to the General Passenger Agent, Newfoundland Railway, St. John's. N. F. may be the best method of securing a photograph of what remains of the fort, as the coastal steamers of this company make Chateau Bay a regular port of call during the summer months. I have tried all the bookstores and photographic studios of St. John's but without success.

MEXICO wants no beachcombers, so make your own way.

Request:—I am planning a hiking trip to Mexico's southern border, starting from Texas.

I am lacking information on equipment and routes of travel.

I intend to carry along enough money to last two months and from then on—well, I was a pretty good beachcomber in the Islands, and in Brazil, so I guess I won't starve in Mexico. How much money would you suggest that I carry on this trip?

What is your opinion of such a trip? I speak Spanish, but not too well.

—Ralph C. Mc Cabe, Port Ivory, S. I. N. Y.

Reply by Mr. R. S. Benjamin:—The best, in fact the only, route you can take to get to Mexico's southern border is the new Pan American Highway starting at Laredo, Texas. This new highway is like no other highway in the world, and for a hiker it will be plenty tough. I am sure that if you go through with it, you will be the first one. I met a young fellow from Oklahoma making the trip by bicycle and he was gritting his teeth and plowing ahead, half way between Texas and Mexico City.

The least amount of money I would suggest would be about seventy-five dollars to take across the border. The customs officials do not welcome any one with much less than that for they want to prevent as much as possible "beachcombing." They apparently have enough of that among their own people.

Any of the large oil companies issue good maps of Mexico with all the roads charted. You can buy a burro for a few dollars across the border to pack your equipment, tent, etc., and the animal will make as much speed as you will. Be sure you carry Halazone tablets for the purification of any doubtful water. Food you can buy from natives and cook it yourself over a camp fire. Best to start after the rainy season has ended.

The trip is possible though quite an adventurous one. It's quite an exciting trip even by automobile as we found out. Beachcomb if you will, only don't get caught trying to find a job. That is agin' the law down there.

A SNIPE, a Moth, or a Frostbite—all small sail boats for shallow waters.

Request:—Having assisted my sons to build a couple of outboard motor boats, I now want to build a small sail boat for myself.

My boys, 14 and 16, spend their summers on the southern shore of Lake Erie at Van Buren Point. The lake is shallow here for quite a distance out, and so a shallow draft is essential. I know nothing about sailing but was thinking of a skimmer type of boat with a movable centerboard.

Will you please give me your comments on this? Also refer me to some place where working drawings can be secured.

—H. B. Kirkpatrick, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Reply by Mr. A. R. Knauer:—I believe the Snipe type boat might meet your requirements, and am sending you a folder on this particular type. Over one thousand of these boats have already been built. Knocked down sets from $29.00 up can be purchased from the Skaneateles Boat & Canoe Company, Skaneateles, New York.

The Moth class catboat is a ten-foot boat designed to strict rules is a small boat that might meet your requirements.

Last but not least, the class B "Frostbite" dinghy is a wonderful sporting class. It is eleven feet, five and one-half inches long, a good little sea boat, and can be used with oars or motor also. These boats have aroused more interest than any other type, and are raced the year round by beginners and the best of sailing talent. I can highly recommend the "Frostbite."

Plans and specifications for all of these boats can be secured from the Rudder Publishing Company at 50c each for the Dinghy and Moth class, and $1.50 for the Snipe class.

TRY running a race in a buster brown collar. No horse likes a check rein.

Request:—What information can you give me on the care and training of horses, especially the cart or trotting horse?

Does an extra tight overcheck rein harm a horse's health or ever cause him to go blind? I have raced for several years and most of the horses on the track are reined up very tight. Most of the horses I've had increased speed as I got their heads higher. They seemed to stumble less, too. But here at Pomona my friends say a tight rein is cruel and a torture to the horse.

Is there any advantage in checking a horse's head so tight that his nose is on a level with the top of his head? I've always let my horses drop their noses a little. I thought they could see ahead better that way. But horses reined in tighter have won races, and I could have pulled mine up a few inches. One time in the central states I saw one horse reined up head and nose level and he made a roaring noise as if the check rein made it hard for him to breathe. Yet he won the race. Besides the roaring noise, he fought the rein.

I ask these questions because I don't want to hurt any horse I ever have, but a check rein seems to be a good idea if it makes a horse increase speed, etc.

—W. E. Wilson, Riverside, Calif.

Reply by Major R. E. Dupuy:—Basic information upon the care and training of horses in general may be found in publications issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Animal Industry, both at Washington, D. C.; insofar as the trotting horse is concerned I suggest subscribing to the "American Horse Breeder," Boston, Mass.; and "Horseman and Fair World," Indianapolis, Ind., published entirely in the interest of the trotting horse people.

If the Creator had desired a horse to do his best with his head and nose on a level, star-gazing, he would have built him thus. Any practice by artificial means to distort human or animal anatomy is harmful. How harmful depends upon each individual circumstance.

For the normal horse there is no advantage in a tight check rein.

You speak of a horse making a "roaring noise" while tightly checked up. That animal was of unsound wind, a "roarer" or "wind-sucker" and in such a condition he was not helped by having his head pulled up to increase his difficulty in breathing. He would probably have roared just as loudly if run without check.

The horse is an animal in which can be found many defects of conformation or soundness; to correct these, man has invented numerous devices; other men have taken up those devices as being advantageous, without worrying whether or not their own animals had the defects for which the funny rigging was constructed.

The horse is a living machine, bearing his weight on the fore legs and propelling himself by means of the hind legs. His muscles and nerves form a series of springs and these he controls using mainly his long neck and head, and his tail, to balance himself. To obtain full power he must have use of that head and neck. An experiment which should be of value to you or any other man interested in whether or not a check rein is beneficial, would be to fasten a band around your forehead, and have someone connect that band from the back of your head to the back of your belt by another strap, which should be tightened until your forehead, nose and chin are horizontal. Then see how far and how fast you could run, and whether or not you could beat another runner who did not have this artificial rigging.

The check rein came into being to bring a lazy horse's head up so that he would look "smart." Naturally, an animal so checked brings his forefeet higher in the air, and some people unwittingly think him "spirited," not knowing that this is but his defense and his attempt to relieve the aggravation. Trotting men have found that a horse checked up is not so liable to break into a gallop as an unchecked horse; naturally, since it will be more difficult.

Now, take a horse which has been habitually checked up until his neck is distorted. If you should run him without a check, he has nothing to lean on to balance himself as he has been heretofore forced to do, and therefore is uncertain and will not run as fast as if he had this artificial aid which has become natural to him.

From these beginnings have come the pernicious habit of encumbering the horse with check reins. There is no reason to believe that an overcheck rein will cause blindness; there is every reason to believe that it will distort the animal's natural balance, obstruct his wind, and thus in the long run shorten his length of useful life. For these reasons any check rein is an instrument of cruelty. Basically, there is no more reason for a check rein than there is for a docked tail.

TECHNICALLY, a deserter. But he did his share.

Request:—I enlisted in the Second Infantry at Fort Thames, Ky., in 1908, and was discharged fourteen months later on disability. I had that corrected and reenlisted in New York. I was sent to the Philippines in the Ninth Infantry and was discharged in July 1914 at Laredo, Texas. Reenlisted there.

I came home on leave. The World War started in August 1914, and I went to Canada, enlisted with the Canadian Army and served four years in France.

As I understand it, all men who enlisted and served with the Allied Armies were given back their citizenship on return, and all deserters were pardoned.

First: can I apply for my statement of service in the U. S. Army, my discharges having been lost?

Second: What is my standing as a U. S. citizen? I tried to be transferred to the U. S. forces in 1917 and couldn't, and my desertion in 1914 was a foolish move made under youthful excitement and lust for adventure.

—J. F. K., Mass.

Reply by Captain Glen R. Townsend:—Your desertion from the U. S. Army under the circumstances given does not involve the loss of your citizenship rights. Such rights are lost only in cases of desertion in time of actual war and then only by the action of court martial.

To clear up your status I suggest that you write to the Adjutant General, War Department, Washington, D. C., stating the circumstances of your desertion and inclosing proof of your service with the Canadian forces during the World War. The War Department will then take appropriate action. You are not subject to punishment at this time as the statute of limitations, requiring that any trial for desertion be initiated within two years after the date of desertion, has run in your case. The fact that you served during the war with the Canadian forces will also carry great weight.

FORTUNE hunting frowned upon in South America.

Request:—During the past two years I have read various articles in some of the leading magazines of the country about the opportunities in Venezuela and the Guianas for adventurous Americans. From the impression these stories create a man can go into these countries with a small stake and with a little luck and knowledge clean up a good deal of money. Personally most of these stories sound phony to me, but since I have a yen to travel and seek my fortune, I decided to ask you for some authentic information.

1. Is it practical for a man to try and go into South America without connections with some North American firm?

2. Do opportunities actually exist whereby a man, inexperienced, could go into the interior and expect to make even 10% on his investment of time and money?

3. What type of training would best fit a man for this type of a career?

4. What amount of money, in your opinion, would be necessary to fit out a small expedition for two white men to go into the interior?

5. Do the governments of the several countries place many obstacles, i. e. permits, licenses, taxes, etc., in the path of the would be explorer and fortune hunter.

—Wallace Mac Gregor, Bonneville, Ore.

Reply by Dr. P. V. Shaw, Sao Paulo, Brazil:—You are quite right about being skeptical regarding the fortunes to be made by men of no experience and little knowledge or training in Venezuela and the Guianas. Fortunes have been made, but only by men possessing these three qualities and men of very unusual ability.

Generally speaking, I should consider it impractical for an American to come down here without connections with some North American firm. On the other hand, the man with the proper experience and training, with some capital, a great deal of initiative and the ability to get on with the Latin Americans and adapt himself to conditions here might make a good go of it, but his opportunity is not in the interior unless he wants to be a farmer, but in industry.

In the case of the fortune hunter and explorer, I should not advise anyone to start out with less than a thousand dollars and that would be very little indeed, necessitating doing everything as inexpensively as possible, and permitting only a short stay. Very often travelers are not allowed off the beaten track. There are, of course, regulations regarding importing firearms and regarding mining. Write to the Consuls of the various countries for all this information.

GOVERNMENTAL advice on a career for young men—aviation.

Request:—I am a young man intensely interested in aviation as a career. Will you advise me on the subject? What school offers the best course, and what is the approximate cost? I am thinking more of the engineering courses. Could I work my way through, do you think?

—J. M. H., Alba, Mich.

Reply by Major Falk Harmel:—There are quite a number of aviation schools in this country. At some of the better schools, those which have received approved certificates from the Bureau of Air Commerce, Department of Commerce, Washington, D. C., the tuition fees for a course in flying come rather high, but this is necessarily so because the overhead connected with a first class flying school is a very big item.

I would suggest you write to the Bureau of Air Commerce, Department of Commerce, for a list of schools where flying training may be secured. At the same time, also request a copy of Aeronautics Bulletin No. 19, entitled "Aviation Training." This pamphlet contains valuable information for one interested in entering the flying game.

According to a survey made by the Bureau of Air Commerce as to costs of flying instruction, it appears that the average cost of a course leading to securing an amateur pilot license is $276.00; for a private pilot's license, $505.00; for a limited commercial pilot, $553.00 and for a transport pilot, $1,777.

I have talked with an official of the Bureau of Air Commerce regarding the possibilities of students working their way through flying schools, and he states that he knows of no schools where this can be done. The operation of a flying school is a very expensive proposition, and those in this line of business naturally expecting returns on their investment for airplanes, engines, hangars, flying field, mechanics, flying instructors and what not, cannot very well afford to carry students without tuition fees. Flying equipment is subject to rapid wear and tear and in need of constant replacement.

THE road to Lhasa is not well traveled by white men.

Request:—I would like to know how many white men or foreigners have reached Lhasa, in Tibet, and who was the first.

Have you ever been to Lhasa? If so, by what route did you go?

How far is Lhasa from Punaka in Bhutan?

Who is the present ruler of Tibet?

Does the government of China exercise any influence or power in the Lhasa government? Does Great Britain have any influence within the boundaries of Tibet?

Is the road to Lhasa now open to outsiders?

Are there any large portions of Tibet which have not yet been thoroughly explored?

Which man has been most responsible, by exploration, for tearing the veil of mystery away from Tibet?

—Robert C. Lord, Lafayette, Colo.

Reply by Mr. S. S. Cramer:—Men, particularly explorers, have argued over the correct answer to your first question for years. I really do not know how many Europeans have reached Lhasa nor who was the first. I use the term European in its broad sense in preference to saying "white men." I also use it as we cannot include the Chinese nor the Indians as they have had commerce with Tibet for centuries, and have somewhat free access to Lhasa if they are able to show proper religious and commercial credits. As to the number of Europeans who have reached Lhasa, my guess is no better than yours. The man who says he is the only one to ever have reached Lhasa is a little mistaken. There haven't been many but I should say that there were a couple of dozen that could substantiate their statements.

Who was the first? Probably some Catholic monk whose name has long been forgotten. It is known that monks reached Tibet a hundred years or so before Columbus ever sailed on his famous voyage. The Jesuits and Capuchin monks wrote many reports on this country in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The first Englishman that we have any real record of is George Bogle who entered Tibet in 1774, but he did not get to Lhasa. Thomas Manning has been considered the first Englishman to reach Tibet and go on to Lhasa which he reached in 1812. However, at that time there was a William Moorcroft who was supposed to have been living in Lhasa for about twelve years. So there you are.

I have never been to Lhasa. Had I ever gone there I should have traveled via Western China.

I should say that Lhasa is about two or three hundred miles from Punaka, the capitol of Bhutan. That is as the crow flies. But why select Punaka? Bhutan is almost as remote and hard to get into as Tibet.

Tibet is one country where church and state are one and the same. There are two heads of the church, the Dalai Lama and the Panchan Lama. The Panchan Lama fled to exile a few years ago which left the Dalai Lama pretty much in control. It is a problem as to whether his followers and the new Dalai Lama can maintain that position.

The government of China no longer exercises any power in Lhasa, rather it is the other way around. The Lamas exercise quite a bit of power over the many thousands of Chinese who adhere to the Lamaistic religion. It must be remembered though, that the

Tibetans are closely related to the Chinese.

Great Britain has exercised some influence over the government of Tibet for the past thirty-odd years, since the famous Younghusband expedition. This influence is not particularly dominant but is more of a control to see that no other foreign nation gains favorable control in Tibet.

I might recommend an excellent book of the facts about this early expedition and with some very good pictures. "Nowhere Else in the World" by Enders and Anthony.

The road to Lhasa is not open to Europeans. In fact there is not much of a road, but what there is is not even open to other Asiatics who cannot show some good reason for being on it. It is not the most healthy road to travel as the Tibetans do not care for too much curiosity about their own country and religion. Lhasa is the religious center of Tibet.

There are many large portions of Tibet that have never been thoroughly explored. I would say that not more than five percent of Tibet has been explored and that small area has not been exhausted of all its possibilities. There is still enough left to keep an army of anthropologists and archeologists going for a couple of life times.

I really couldn't say which man had been the most responsible for popularizing Tibet. Among the older and better known are: Hedin, Younghusband, O'Connor, and Dorjiev. We should not lose sight of the nameless Catholic monks who started much of this in their attempt to Christianize the entire world.

AN OLD London Colt in its original case is a valuable relic.

Request:—I have recently obtained a Colts Pistol, which takes a cap and ball, or slug, probably a .32. On the barrel, in parenthesis is: Address Col. Colt, London.

On the revolving magazine is a rather beautiful engraving of a stage hold-up, also COLTS PATENT: No. 9537 (Number of the gun, repeated on all parts.) On the left hand side of the barrel is stamped two initials: V P, with what appears to be a smudge above each. These are repeated on the magazine.

The gun is in what seems to be the original case, for it has a sheet in the top which lists the instructions and the best method of handling. In the case was a combination "L" wrench and screw driver, a powder horn of copper made by James Dikon and Sons, Sheffield, a ramrod, a casting form for ball and slug, a box for caps, and each nicely laid out in the case.

Could you tell me the approximate age of this piece, and whether or not it is of value?

—Alfred F. Zigler, La Grande, Ore.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—You have a rare revolver, one of those made in London, England, by Colt, in the 'fifties of the past century. They were identical in manufacture and design to the ones made here, but were produced over there that they might find favor with English purchasers more readily.

The factory was not operated very long by the Colonel, but was sold to a firm known as the London Pistol Company, who carried on the manufacture for some time. Today, the London Colt is valued by collectors, of whom I recommend the following: Mr. F. Theodore Dexter, 910 Jefferson St., Topeka, Kansas.

The initials "V P" mean, "Viewed and Proved," a requirement of the English law making the inspection and firing with heavy overloads by Government inspectors obligatory.

You have a nice relic; I've not seen such an outfit for some time, and it's quite valuable, too. I don't know the current offers on them, but Mr. Dexter will.

THAT ounce of prevention makes a big medicine kit.

Request:—We are at present making preparations for a trip around the world by motor truck. This journey will take us approximately three years. All three of us have been pronounced physically fit, but with the task before us, we shall be called upon to our utmost.

What sort of first aid equipment would you advise?

What anti-toxins should we be inoculated or vaccinated with, to insure a margin of safety?

The three of us are quite capable of taking care of any usual snake bites, but India will, of course, surprise us. What is the best procedure when confronted with deadlier snakebites?

I should be very thankful for your expert suggestions.

—R. U. K., New York, N. Y.

Reply by Dr. C. P. Fordyce:—I will give you a list of what you should start out with. Renewal of units can be made in the larger cities en route and in going into the various regions I suggest that you consult persons locally as to any particular hazards you are apt to encounter on a projected route. Several of the bigger drug supply firms have depots over the world: the Abbott Labora-

tories of North Chicago; Parke, Davis & Co., Detroit, Mich.; and Burroughs, Wellcome & Co., New York City and London.

It is advisable for you and members of your party to be vaccinated against smallpox and to have innoculations against typhoid fever before starting on your trip. If possible one or all members should take the regulation course in first-aid and if possible the advanced course. Contact Dr. Redden, American Red Cross, 315 Lexington Ave., New York, about this. Get a copy of the Red Cross textbook on first aid and also the book "Tabloid—A Brief Medical Guide" from Burroughs, Wellcome & Co., New York. It will inform you especially about diseases you are apt to encounter in the tropics.

The treatment of snake bite is given in the Red Cross book and a lot of investigation makes me conclude that the 1-2-3 First Aid Kit for snake bite is the most practical and the directions are fine. The standard outfit sells for $2.50. Order from Samuel R. Benedict, c/o Alabama Power Co., Birmingham, Alabama. You should have at least one dose (in a syringe as they furnish it) of antivenin put out by Sharpe & Dohme, Philadelphia, although it has been found that one to five doses might be needed. So much depends upon the first aid treatment (given with the 1-2-3 kit) that it will get you out safely in most cases.

The Medical Kit:

Quinine sulphate capsules 5 grains. Bottle of 200.
Aspirin. 5 grains. No. 100.
Laxative pills (Hinkles). No. 200.
Epsom Salts. 1 lb.
Essence of ginger 4 ounce. (Stomach cramps ½ teaspoonful to a half cup hot water.)
Aromatic spirits of ammonia—two 1-ounce bottles with screw caps.
Halazone tablets 500 for water purifying.
Chlorazene antiseptic for external use.

Surgical Kit:

Tincture of iodine (half strength) Two 1-ounce bottles with screw or rubber caps.
Campho-Phenique liquid, No. 4 vials. This is by far the most useful antiseptic for small areas as small wounds, small infections and to relieve itching areas and skin diseases. Apply with a piece of cotton wound on a toothpick or match. Good to apply to an aching tooth.
Phenol, 2 ounces; and glycerin, 2 ounces; mixed and used diluted with water—1 medicine dropper full of the stock mixture to about 4 ounces of water. Fine for skin irritations of all kinds.
Argyrol powder or cargentos tablets, ½ ounce. Dilute with water (your druggist will direct you) and used in the eyes to protect from infection and to relieve irritation. Drop in with medicine dropper and wash out with droppers full of plain boiled water (cooled).
Rubbing alcohol, 4 or 5 ounces. Good for emergency sterilizing of instruments and to sterilize the skin.
Cotton. Absorbent. 1 pound in 1 ounce cartons.
Bandages. 2 inch. No. 6.
Bandages. 1 inch. No. 6.
Bandages. 3 inch. No. 3.
Surgeons gauze. 1 yard packages. Take No. 12.
Handifold gauze pads 3x3 inches in envelope. No. 100.
Drybak Bandaides. Strip of adhesive with gauze in center. Most useful for small cuts. No. 50.
Adhesive plaster 1 inch by 10 yards Drybak. Take No. 2.
Thermometer.
Forceps.
Small scissors.
3 medicine droppers.
Carbolized vaseline tubes. No. 12.
Silk sutures, surgeon's needle and needle holder. Ask your doctor to instruct you.
Bamber Oil. Have an ounce bottle for each person and a stock bottle of 1 pint. Mix enough to fill the one pint bottle to start with. Then take two four ounce bottles of oil of citronella with you to mix up more of the oil (Bamber) as directed in the enclosed sheet on tropical hygiene, for you can get a base such as cocoanut oil and kerosene anywhere that drugs are sold.

Get one of the medium sized fishing tackle boxes for your first aid kit and fill it with the smaller units and carry the extra supplies in a separate box. Label all units, especially bottles, well and wrap in paper as the labels will rub in travel.

Be especially careful about pure water and have one or two desert water bags along and use your big kettles in the mess kit for boiling the water. This should be routine where there is any doubt about the water and in emergency you can use the halazone tablets. If the boiled water is dirty with sediment you can filter it through absorbent cotton held in a clean hand over a bucket.

Every wound should be treated with an antiseptic and covered with a sterilized gauze pad. I find that I use adhesive plaster to hold these in place oftener than bandages but the latter are useful in sprains and fractures.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

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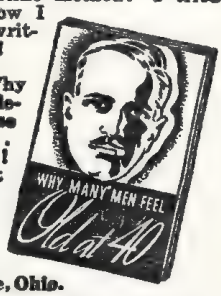

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30x5.00-20	2.40	1.05
5.25-17	2.45	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.60	1.15
5.50-17	2.75	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.75	1.15
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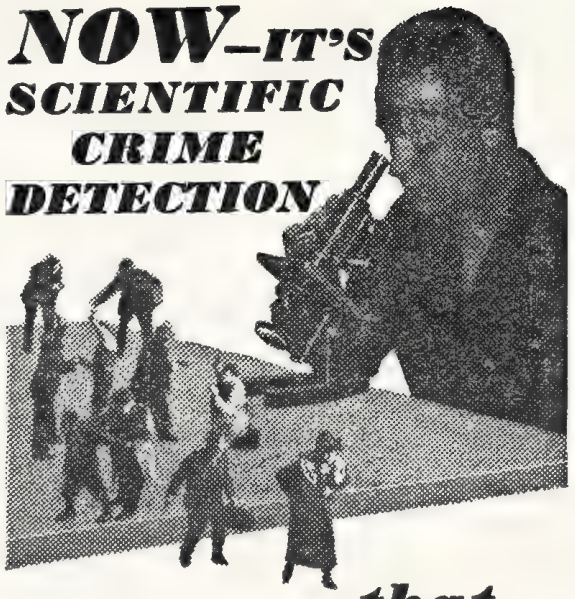

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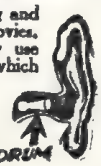

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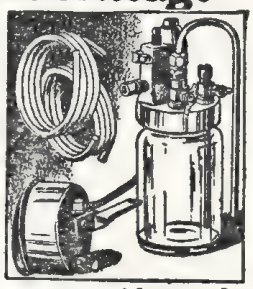

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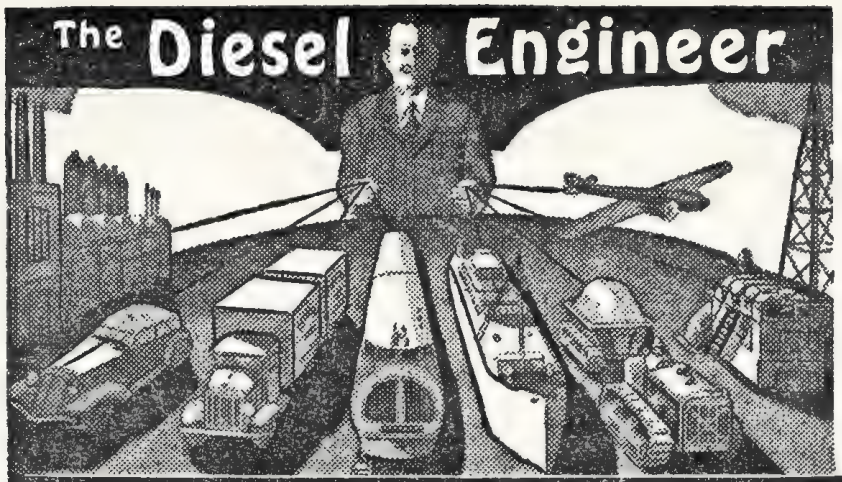

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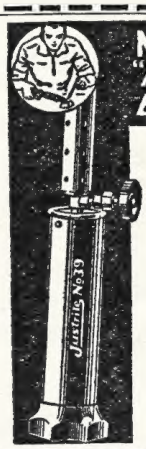

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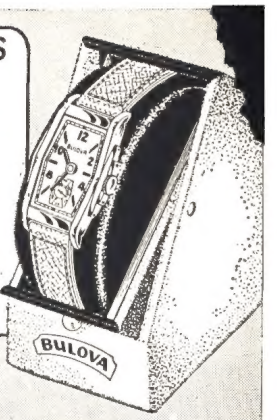

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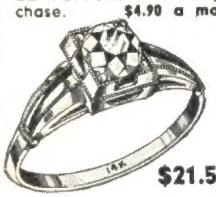

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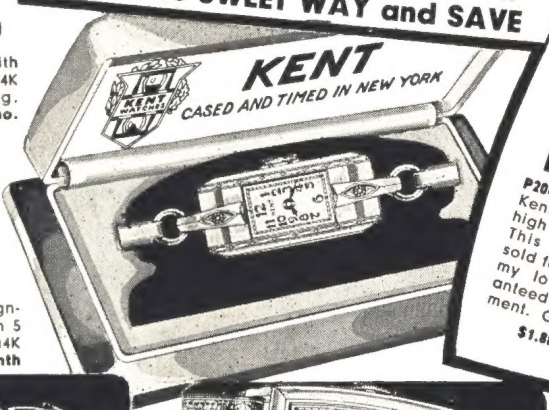

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